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ABSTRACT

This report presents an evaluation of the Scottish classroom assistants initiative. The evaluation explored: the relationship between student achievement and use of classroom assistants; whether the initiative enabled better utilization of teaches' time; and the effects of the initiative on classroom interaction and students' learning experiences. Data collection involved education authorities' reports of their pilot programs and surveys and observations of a national sample of education authorities and schools. Key findings include: by August 2000, there were approximately 2,500 classroom assistants in Scottish schools; most assistants were women ages 35-44 years; assistants possessed a variety of educational qualifications; most assistants had previous experience in schools; most were very satisfied with their jobs; most teachers and principals were very satisfied with their assistants; teachers perceived that assistants had reduced the pressure on them by relieving them of routine tasks; the presence of assistants allowed students a wider range of learning experiences; concerns about the initiative focused on funding, training, role clarification, and allocation of assistants' time; and teachers without assistants were concerned that students were being deprived of possible benefits. Four appendixes present details of schools sampled, survey methodology, questionnaires, and case study methodology. (SM)

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'An Extra Pair of Hands?'

Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

Interim Report

Ursula Schlapp
Valerie Wilson
Julia Davidson

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Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

Interim Report

Ursula Schlapp
Valerie Wilson
Julia Davidson

SCRE
The Scottish Council for Research in Education

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

In January 2000, the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) commissioned the Scottish Council for Research in Education to undertake a two-year evaluation of the classroom assistants initiative in Scotland. The study is being undertaken in association with Edinburgh's Telford College and the Scottish Further Education Unit.

Aims

The overarching aim of the evaluation is to provide formative feedback to the Scottish Executive as the classroom assistants' initiative is implemented. The evaluation has three broad objectives. These are to:

- explore the association between pupil attainment and the use of classroom assistants
- determine whether the initiative has enabled better utilisation of teachers' time
- document the effects of the initiative on classroom interaction and the learning experiences of pupils.

Methods

The evaluation is being undertaken in three stages. First, education authorities' reports of their pilot programmes were analysed to give a national picture of the initiative at the end of the pilot phase (Wilson *et al*, 2000). Second in September 2000, information was collected from a national sample of education authorities and schools by postal survey and classroom observation. The key findings from these activities are presented in this interim report. Finally, the national survey and observations will be repeated in 2001 and reported in 2002.

2. Key findings

To date the following key findings have emerged:

- By August 2000 there were approximately 2500 classroom assistants in post in Scottish primary schools. Their hours of work ranged between one and 30 hours per week.
- Most classroom assistants in our sample were women and more than half were aged between 35 and 44 years
- Classroom assistants possessed a variety of educational qualifications, with approximately one third holding qualifications in childcare
- The majority of the sample had had previous experience in schools, many as parent helpers and general or special needs auxiliaries
- Most of the classroom assistants were very satisfied with their jobs, the hours of work and conditions within their schools

- Some classroom assistants were working towards, or seeking opportunities to work towards, qualifications which were relevant to their current post. Approximately a quarter of the sample aspired to becoming a teacher in the future, while approximately half had no wish to develop their careers further at this time
- The majority of class teachers, headteachers and education authority representatives were very satisfied with the classroom assistants initiative but felt it was too soon to identify its impact on pupils' attainment
- Teachers perceived that classroom assistants had reduced the pressure on them by relieving them of routine tasks and 'freeing up' more time for teaching
- The presence of classroom assistants allowed pupils to be offered a wider range of learning experiences including more interaction with adults, increased practical activities, games and reinforcement of learning
- Concerns about the initiative tended to focus on future funding, training, role clarification and allocation of classroom assistants' time. A small number of teachers were less than satisfied with the impact of the initiative, of which half identified the small amount of time they had been allocated classroom assistants as problematic
- Other less satisfied respondents cited the varying abilities and personalities of the individual classroom assistants, the need to provide them with more training and the lack of time for liaison and planning between classroom assistants and class teachers as causes of dissatisfaction
- Those teachers without classroom assistants were concerned that their pupils were being deprived of possible benefits; a number were in small schools but some from large schools also felt that their allocation of classroom assistants was insufficient.

3. Managing the initiative

A variety of practices regarding the recruitment, selection, training and deployment of classroom assistants emerged at this stage. Education authorities tend to:

- advertise classroom assistant posts locally or allow schools to provide information to potential candidates
- involve headteachers in the selection process
- employ classroom assistants on a variety of contracts
- adopt a range of approaches to the deployment of classroom assistants, with approximately half assigning classroom assistants on the basis of adult: pupil ratios in individual schools
- offer induction training to classroom assistants.

Once appointed to schools, classroom assistants tended to work in more than one class; some for quite short periods of time. This created problems for many teachers, a third of whom highlighted lack of joint planning time as a concern. Remarkably few problems in teamworking emerged, despite the fact that headteachers and teachers had received limited support on how to manage the initiative or how to involve classroom assistants in whole-school activities. Practices varied across schools and many headteachers were interested in sharing ideas on best practice.

4. Impact on schools and pupils

Classroom assistants were having an impact on schools, teachers and pupils by spending most of their time supporting learning within the classroom. Specifically:

- Most classroom assistants undertook a wide range of tasks in classrooms, most often with small groups or individual pupils and approximately half were deployed to support Early Intervention activities for some of the time
- The majority of class teachers with classroom assistants found it easy to work with them and appreciated their flexibility, competence and initiative. Their presence had allowed teachers to concentrate on teaching individuals and groups, to expect more from pupils and to increase their enthusiasm for teaching. However, factors which continue to inhibit good working relationships include lack of planning time, the extra work required to plan, limitations in the abilities of particular assistants and the demands of working as a team
- Teachers and headteachers believe that the classroom assistants initiative has led to an improvement in pupils' participation in activities, in the range of learning experiences offered to them, and in their motivation and behaviour. The majority believe that there has been an improvement more generally in pupil attainment since 1998 and Early Intervention was most often identified as the primary influence, followed by the classroom assistants initiative and reduced infant class sizes
- Most parents were largely uninformed about the initiative. However, none reported any specific difficulties associated with the presence of classroom assistants, but some would like to know more about the initiative.

5. Interim conclusion

Overall stakeholders are very positive about the initiative and its effect on teachers and pupils. However, we believe it is too early to draw firm conclusions about its possible impact on pupil attainment. In addition, some concerns emerged and these will be explored further during the next stage of the evaluation. These include:

- The developing role of classroom assistants
- Time for planning and liaison with teachers

- Timetabling of classroom assistants within schools
- Training for classroom assistants and teachers
- Inclusion of classroom assistants in whole-school developments.

The complete report is presented below.

1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and research outline

In January 2000, the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) commissioned the Scottish Council for Research in Education to undertake a two-year evaluation of the classroom assistants initiative in Scotland. The study was undertaken in association with Edinburgh's Telford College and the Scottish Further Education Unit. Data were collected in three main phases. First, education authorities' reports of their pilot programmes were analysed to give a national picture of the initiative at the end of the pilot phase. The outcome was a preliminary report *Classroom Assistants: lessons from the pilot projects* (Wilson, Schlapp, Davidson and Mongiello, 2000). Second in September 2000, information was collected from a national sample of education authorities and schools by postal survey and classroom observation. The key findings from these activities are presented in this interim report. Finally, the national survey and observations will be repeated in 2001 in order to identify progress throughout the whole initiative and all the findings will be presented in a final report in 2002.

1.2 Aims of the evaluation

The overarching aim of the evaluation is to provide formative feedback to the Scottish Executive as the classroom assistants' initiative is implemented. The evaluation had three broad objectives. These are to:

- explore the association between pupil attainment and the use of classroom assistants comparing different models of deployment
- determine whether the initiative has enabled better utilisation of teachers' time
- document the effects of the initiative on classroom interaction and the learning experiences of pupils.

1.3 Background to the research

In this section we outline the educational context in which the classroom assistants initiative and its evaluation are located, and consider how the role of classroom assistants has developed.

School improvement is not just a concern within Scotland: internationally there has been much debate about how it may be brought about. The relationship between attainment and class size has been the focus of a number of research studies. Blatchford and Mortimer (1994) reviewed available published evidence which seemed to indicate that pupil attainment could be raised if adult:pupil ratios were lowered. Longitudinal studies in the USA (eg STARS project) offer evidence that to be really effective, the adult: pupil ratio had to fall to below 1:15. Others argued that existing data were inconclusive in the absence of good quality longitudinal studies. The Scottish approach has been to introduce

classroom assistants with the aim of achieving an adult:pupil ratio of 1:15 in primary schools.

One of the stated aims of the Scottish Executive Education Department is to improve attainment of pupils in Scottish schools. The emphasis on excellence appears in *Targeting Excellence – modernising Scottish schools* (SOEID, 1999b). The classroom assistants initiative, although launched as a pilot phase in 1998, is intended to contribute to this general drive towards school improvement in Scotland.

The classroom assistants is one of a number of initiatives to be funded by the Excellence Fund. Therefore it coexists with other initiatives eg Early Intervention, which also aim to raise standards in Scottish schools. This context of multiple policy initiatives presents particular difficulties for evaluators which we discuss later in this report.

The guidance issued to accompany the classroom assistants initiative indicated that they may be deployed in various situations, eg in early years, older primary classes, composite classes or ones with particular social or emotional difficulties. This guidance has given rise to a variety of ways of allocating classroom assistants within different Education Authorities. This was a key focus of the preliminary report in which we provided a 'map' of implementation patterns to emerge from the pilot projects. In this interim report we include more detail about the ways in which individual schools are using classroom assistants and begin to consider evidence concerning the efficacy of different approaches.

A number of other initiatives, including increased provision of pre-school education and the requirement for additional primary teachers resulting from the McCrone Report, are now making demands on the supply of teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants. Excellence depends not only on volume increases but also quality, particularly the quality of the staff employed. Provision of appropriate training is therefore key. Classroom assistants are offered training consisting of mandatory and optional units through Scottish further education colleges based on the recently released Award structure from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (The Classroom Assistant's Certificate, PDA, 2000).

An important aim of the classroom assistants initiative is to enable more effective use of teachers' time. A recent report from the Accounts Commission (1999) highlighted ways in which administrative tasks could be undertaken more effectively. The McCrone Committee received evidence on, *inter-alia*, teachers' workload and the EIS commissioned SCRE to undertake a survey of how teachers apportion their time between teaching and non-teaching tasks. This report looks at how classroom assistants are altering classroom practices and, therefore, impacting on teachers' workloads.

The use of an 'extra pair of hands', whether by the name of classroom assistant or some other, is not new. Even prior to this initiative, the number of assistants in Scottish schools had augmented substantially in recent years. As well as

employed assistants, parent helpers have also been encouraged to enter the classroom, particularly in the early stages of primary education. In addition, the integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools has increased the demand for special needs assistants, to provide one-to-one support within the classroom. As we found in previous research, managing such multi-disciplinary teams presents particular challenges (Wilson and Pirrie, 2000) and support material to help teachers enhance their team management skills is currently under development (Menmuir *et al.* 2001, under preparation).

In conclusion, in the literature there seems to be considerable lack of clarity surrounding the use of the term classroom assistant, the functions assigned to the post and the changing structure of employment in schools (Marr, 2001 in preparation). Although much of the research refers only to England and Wales, it is reasonable to assume that some of the issues identified by other researchers may also affect Scottish schools. These issues are reflected in our evaluation questions which we list below.

1.4 Evaluation questions

In order to evaluate the perceived impact of classroom assistants, we address a number of evaluation questions. These may conveniently be grouped under three headings.

Questions relating to the identity of classroom assistants

- Who are classroom assistants?
- From which groups have they been recruited?
- What qualifications/training or previous experiences do they possess?
- Are certain groups under-represented eg males, members of ethnic minorities?
- How is demand for classroom assistants interacting with the supply and what effects does it seem to be having on the supply of nursery nurses in pre-school establishments?

Questions relating to the deployment of classroom assistants in schools

- How are classroom assistants currently deployed and managed by Education Authorities/school and stage?
- Have distinctive patterns of deployment by Authority, school or stage emerged?

Questions related to the effects of classroom assistants

- How is the use of classroom assistants changing the teaching and learning dynamics within the classroom?
- Do teachers perceive that their own time is now better utilised?
- What effects, if any, has the use of classroom assistants had on behaviour, attitudes and attainment of pupils?

- Can the efficacy of their use be established and what suggestions for improvement can be made?

1.5 Research methods

Two main methods of data collection are employed in this evaluation: surveys of a range of stakeholders in schools and education authorities, and in-depth studies of a small number of schools, involving observations and interviews. Some details are given below and a fuller account of the methodology, including sample profiles, response rates and exemplars of the questionnaires and an observation schedule, are included in the Appendices.

1.5.1 Survey methodology and key response rates

Questionnaires were sent to:

- all 32 Education authorities from which we received an 88% response rate
- 96 schools, three in each authority from which 84% responded.

Each school was sent questionnaires to be completed by:

- the headteacher
- all classroom assistants in the school
- two class teachers (including wherever possible one who worked with a classroom assistant and one who did not).

Also in the case study schools, brief questionnaires were sent to 200 parents of children in classes which had classroom assistants from whom we received 56 responses.

The school sample

Each of the 32 education authorities identified three primary schools with, wherever possible, one school in each of three broad categories:

- no CA support (15 schools from 15 authorities)
- CAs in post for less than 6 months (33 schools from 27 authorities)
- CAs in post for at least one year (48 schools from 32 authorities)

It should be noted that as many authorities made it a priority to deploy classroom assistants in all of their primary schools, only a relatively small number of schools could be identified as 'control' schools in this evaluation.

1.5.2. The case study school methodology

Six schools from across the authorities were selected as case studies. These were chosen to reflect a variety of geographic locations including urban and rural settings, a range of social backgrounds, school rolls ranging from 30 to 400 pupils and classroom assistant weekly time ranging from 12.5 to 27.5 hours.

The main methods used in the six schools were:

- Interviews with the headteacher or classroom assistant-coordinator which focused on the management of classroom assistants and their impact on pupil attainment
- Observation of classroom assistants' interactions within the classroom. These 'critical events' were recorded with the aid of a digital camera.
- Discussion of 'critical events' with class teachers, classroom assistants and groups of pupils to explore the range of classroom assistants' activities and the effects on learning and teaching. This method of 'stimulated recall', based on digital images of interesting activities has been developed in SCRE. (For a fuller description see McPake *et al*, 1999).

1.6 Structure of the report

This interim report comprises five main sections of which this introduction is the first.

Section 1 outlines the current educational context in Scotland within which the classroom assistants initiative is located. It also describes the evaluation aims, questions and methods.

Section 2 presents an overview of stakeholders' opinions of the initiative as it entered its second year. It presents information about the numbers of classroom assistants in post at this point, and their views of the job. It also describes how satisfied education authorities and schools were with the initiative at this stage, what they felt it was contributing to schools and the concerns they had about it.

Section 3 looks at management of the initiative, both by education authorities and by individual schools. It describes the processes involved in recruitment, deployment, support and training of the large numbers of assistants who have been taken on to implement the initiative. Successes and difficulties are identified and discussed.

Section 4 looks at the impact of classroom assistants on schools and pupils. Benefits and problems are identified, and examples of approaches taken by individual schools are included to illustrate a number of issues.

Section 5 considers the extent to which the aims of the evaluation have been met at this interim stage. It also identifies issues which might be important to the longer term success of the initiative.

Throughout sections 2 to 4 of the report, quotations from the open responses to survey questionnaires are used to illustrate the findings. More detailed views and approaches obtained from the six case study schools are presented as boxed examples.

A list of references and further details of our methodology are presented at the end of the report.

2: Overview of the first year

2.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the impact of the classroom assistants initiative at the end of the first year of its implementation. We estimate the number of classroom assistants in post by August 2000 and report their perceptions of their role and their career aspirations. These are juxtaposed against the views of education authority representatives, headteachers and class teachers – all of whom had a role to play in the implementation. Level of satisfaction with the initiative, perceptions of its main contributions to schools and on-going concerns are also highlighted.

2.2 Numbers of classroom assistants

By August 2000, almost 2500 classroom assistants had been appointed to work in Scottish schools. Their working week ranged from one to over 30 hours per week which equates to a little over 2000 full-time equivalent posts based upon a 25 hour working week.

For a variety of reasons it is difficult to produce a more accurate figure of the number of classroom assistants funded under this initiative. Authorities provided us with information about the total number of assistants employed in their schools but did not always differentiate between those funded by the Classroom Assistants Initiative and those who formed part of the Early Intervention Programme. Some authorities had clearly combined the funding and the roles for staff appointed under each, making it difficult for evaluators to disaggregate their effects.

In addition, funding is allocated for classroom assistants on the basis of a 25 hour working week but some authorities employ classroom assistants for 27.5 hours or more per week. (The extra time is usually used for planning and preparation with class teachers.) Finally, a small number of schools actually fund classroom assistant posts from their own resources.

2.3 Classroom assistants: who they are and what they think of the job

Who applies for a classroom assistant's post? This is the question which we explore in this section. We present a picture of the people who are currently in post in Scottish schools, their previous experience and educational qualifications. Information was provided by twenty-eight education authorities and a sample of ninety-five classroom assistants. This sample represents 4% of the total number of classroom assistants in post and came from 28 of the 32 authorities. Approximately half of the classroom assistants, who responded to our survey, were new in post in August 2000; the remainder had been appointed either in the previous school session or during the pilot phase of the initiative.

2.3.1 General characteristics

Age

Just over half (55%) of the classroom assistants, who responded to our survey, were in the 35-44 year age group. The others were equally divided between older and younger age bands but only 5% were under 25 years old and 5% over 55 years old.

Gender

Most classroom assistants were women. This continues the trend which we identified in the evaluation of the pilot phase. All but two of the 28 education authorities reported that they had received some applications from men. However, they argued that the small number of men in post is a reflection of the gender imbalance evident in the applications they had received. This age and gender profile tends to support the perceptions expressed by a number of respondents that the post of classroom assistant is particularly attractive to women with school-age children. As two teachers explained:

> *She's an intelligent person; she's just done an English Higher for example. This job is just a way to get her back into the world of working and out from the house as a first step to perhaps thinking about a career for herself when the children are older.*
>
> Class teacher

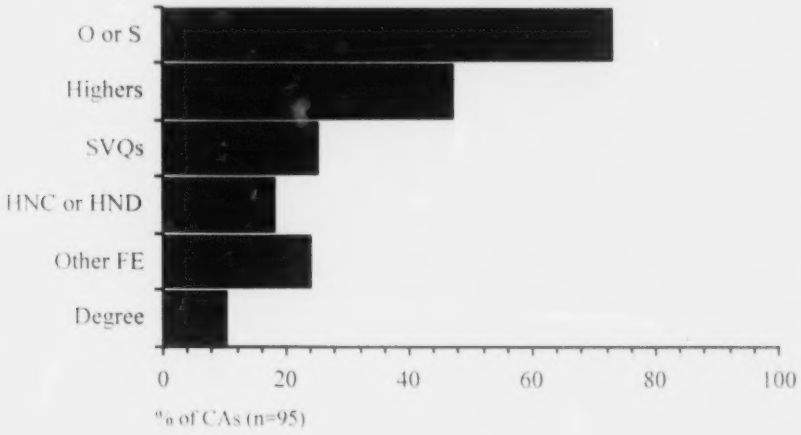
> *This job suits highly qualified people who maybe have children.*
>
> Headteacher

There was some evidence of interest in the post amongst participants on the New Deal Programme and also from members of ethnic minority groups. Approximately a half of the education authorities reported that they had received applications from both groups and a third from people with disabilities. However the total number of applications received from all three groups is small and is reflected in the profile of those appointed. Many authorities were unable to provide exact figures and this points to a need to ensure that equal opportunities monitoring statistics are carefully collected for all appointments.

2.3.2 Qualifications

Classroom assistants held a variety of educational qualifications. As can be seen from Figure 2.1 below, most had SCE ordinary or standard grade awards and 50% had gained highers.

Figure 2.1: Qualifications held by survey classroom assistants



Only a small number (6%) of the classroom assistants responding to the survey appeared to have no qualifications, although it is possible that some of these may just have omitted to answer the question. A third (32%) of the sample had a qualification in childcare, including HNC, NC and SVQ modules in subjects encompassing aspects of Child Care and Education, Nursery Nurse qualifications, modules of the Classroom Assistants PDA, and playleader qualifications. Three were qualified teachers and had taught physical education and Scottish Country Dance.

Nursery nurses

We have alluded earlier to the difficulty of differentiating between classroom assistants employed under the initiative and other adults in the classroom. Twenty-one authorities reported employing qualified nursery nurses as classroom assistants. Other authorities were unable to differentiate between nursery nurses employed as classroom assistants and those employed under the Early Intervention Programme. In practice at the classroom level, it may not matter how an assistant is funded but it creates particular difficulties for evaluators of specific initiatives.

Authorities were asked to comment on their perceptions of the supply and demand of suitable candidates for classroom assistant posts. It may still be too early in the initiative to assess this properly and also, as one respondent pointed out, this is not the only initiative drawing on the supply of people with qualifications in early education and care.

> *Obviously the pool from which we draw is a finite one, and we have made very significant demands on that pool with the appointment of new Nursery Nurses AND the appointment of similarly qualified personnel for the post we have described as "Early Intervention Assistants". So far, we have been able to fill <u>all</u> vacancies.*
>
> Education authority representative

Views on level of qualification needed

A range of views was expressed about the qualifications needed to make an effective classroom assistant. Some believe that providing more qualified teachers would have more of an impact on pupil attainment.

> *So many support staff at times, now - a logistical headache – reducing class sizes with extra teachers would be more effective.*
>
> Headteacher

Others have been converted by their experience of classroom assistants:

> *I'm one of the cynics who initially said 'I don't want classroom assistants. Give me teachers. Don't be silly. I don't want people who are unqualified.' And I couldn't have been more wrong. I think it's a wonderful initiative. The more the better.*
>
> Headteacher

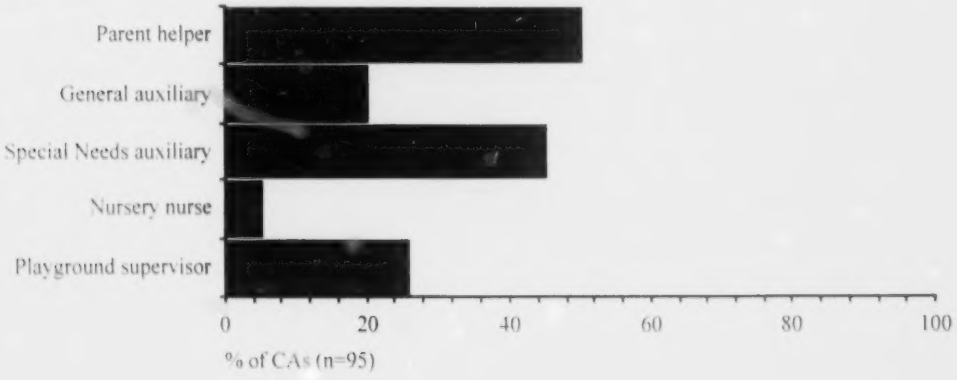
And there are also those who feel that some current classroom assistants are overqualified.

> *One school has a lawyer as a classroom assistant; we also have some teachers. I am not sure why they are classroom assistants or why head teachers appoint them.*
>
> Education authority representative

2.3.3 School-based experience

The majority of the classroom assistants whom we surveyed in Autumn 2000 had already had previous experience in schools prior to their appointment as a classroom assistant. (See Figure 2.2 below)

Figure 2.2: Previous school posts/responsibilities held by surveyed classroom assistants



Responses from headteachers indicate that about half of the assistants in their schools had already been associated with the school in some capacity before taking up the post of classroom assistant. Almost half had been parent helpers and approximately 40% had worked as special needs auxiliaries. Only 13% of the surveyed classroom assistants had had no school-based experience.

Approximately a quarter (27%) of the classroom assistants surveyed held more than one post concurrently. This was often as lunchtime or playground supervisor, but some were employed part-time as a classroom assistant and part-time as a Special Needs auxiliary.

One authority was concerned that the appointment of classroom assistants was impacting on the supply of SEN auxiliaries; and the fact that 45% of our sample of classroom assistants had previously held the post of SEN auxiliary indicates that this may become a more widespread concern in the future.

2.3.4 Classroom assistants' views of the job

Satisfaction with job, hours and school conditions

Overall classroom assistants' level of satisfaction with their jobs was high. The majority were very satisfied with the job, the hours and the conditions in their schools. The greatest single cause of dissatisfaction related to the hours of work but this was expressed by only 5% of respondents. The number of hours per week worked by the classroom assistants is shown in Table 2.1 below. Although these range between one and 30 hours per week, the majority of classroom assistants were working either 25 or 27.5 hour weeks.

Table 2.1: Weekly hours worked by surveyed classroom assistants (n=95)

Weekly hours	Number (%) of classroom assistants
1-5	3 (3)
6-10	2 (2)
11-15	6 (6)
16-20	8 (9)
21-25	36 (38)
26-30	38 (41)
>30	1 (1)

A number of those who were dissatisfied with their hours were working relatively few per week. There were indications that for some the dissatisfaction was associated with pay rather than the number of hours, *per se*.

Future aspirations

Respondents were evenly divided between those who wanted to develop their careers further (48%) and those who presently did not (44%). Approximately half of those with career aspirations saw teaching, usually in the primary or nursery sector, as the way forward. A few were interested in moving into learning support. Many were content in their current posts and their immediate concern was to develop their skills as classroom assistants by gaining relevant qualifications such as the Professional Development Award (PDA). Some were already working towards these, but others had not yet been given the opportunity to do so. Small numbers were thinking in terms of degrees in subjects related to education or child development.

There were some concerns about how far it was possible to develop a career as a classroom assistant:

> *I am currently working towards 2 PDAs and I would like to take a step up the career ladder but I don't know what the next step up is in a school.*
>
> Classroom assistant

Others wondered whether it would be worthwhile:

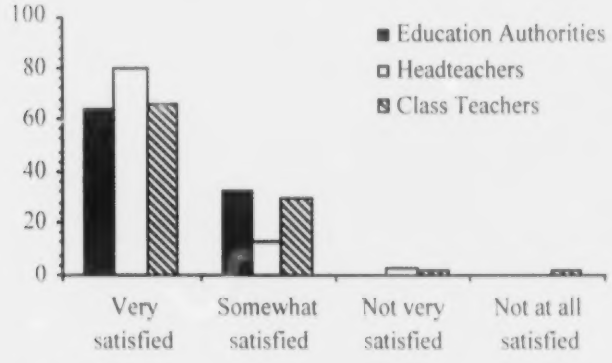
> *...depends on whether it is worth it in a monetary capacity but not ruling it out. There has to be an incentive to developing my career!*
>
> Classroom assistant

> *On average I currently spend six hours per week travelling to and from college, college lectures and assessment work completed at home. This is all carried out in my own time without any pay or time off to study. For an annual salary of just under £6000 I think this is a bit much to expect.*
>
> Classroom assistant

2.4 Level of satisfaction with the initiative

Overall by Autumn 2000 teachers, headteachers and education authority representatives were satisfied with the impact the initiative had had on both teachers and pupils. (See Figure 2.3 below) Teachers reported reduced pressure as classroom assistants relieved them of routine tasks, such as photocopying, preparing displays etc. This created more teaching time and altered the nature of the pupils' experiences. Pupils were offered a wider range of learning experiences, more adult contact, increased practical activities and reinforcement games. These are discussed in more detail in Section 4 below.

Figure 2.3: Overall level of satisfaction with the impact of the classroom assistants initiative



Only three of our respondents were not satisfied with the initiative. Of these, one was a teaching headteacher in a very small rural school, with a single class spanning the entire primary age-range, who explained that:

> *It's only one hour per week!!*
>
> Teaching headteacher

The availability of classroom assistants was an issue for two other teachers. Both had been allocated an hour or less of classroom assistant support per week. One, a P7 teacher with only 13 pupils, noted philosophically that:

> *Extra support is always welcome from suitably qualified personnel.*
>
> Class teacher

The other had only 30-40 minutes of classroom assistant support each week for her class of 26 P7 pupils, and was only somewhat satisfied with the impact of the initiative.

Occasionally, there was evidence that the match between classroom assistant and school had not worked out. This was reflected by a headteacher who described the situation as an 'internal problem – bad appointment', and elsewhere indicated that: 'references [for the classroom assistant] were not full enough regarding working as part of a team etc'. The class teacher in the same school believed that:

> *the Classroom Assistant initiative could and should be very successful. I did not find this to be the case however as my CA has had many personal problems to deal with which I think has affected her performance. Also she is not communicative with the children and needs fairly constant attention and repeated instructions.*
>
> Class teacher

This was the only case in which the classroom assistant appointed was considered to be unsuitable for the post. A small number of other respondents hinted at 'teething troubles' or the need for time for teachers and assistants to get accustomed to working together. Others remarked that they had been lucky to get 'the right person' and that things might not work out so well with someone else.

Of the 20 explanatory comments from teachers who were only somewhat satisfied with the initiative, more than half referred to having insufficient time with the classroom assistant. In some cases this appeared to be exacerbated when classroom assistants were called out for other duties during the teacher's allocated time:

> *I want more! Very annoying when she* [the classroom assistant] *is used elsewhere in the school to cover all sorts of other little emergencies.*
>
> Class teacher

The pattern of allocating classroom assistants could create particular management challenges for teachers. This was exemplified by one who had to incorporate four hourly blocks of classroom assistant time provided by three different classroom assistants into her lesson planning. The headteacher believed that she was making best use of assistants' specific skills but the teacher remarked that she:

> *would prefer to have more contact time with one person.*
>
> Class teacher

Other teachers, who were only somewhat satisfied by the initiative, reported the classroom assistants' abilities and personalities varied, there was a need for more training for classroom assistants, and more time for liaison and planning between classroom assistants and teachers.

2.5 Views on most important contribution of the initiative

Education authority representatives, headteachers and class teachers were asked what they felt was the single most important contribution made by the classroom assistants initiative. The majority of responses from all these groups highlighted one or more of the following: giving teachers more time to teach, freeing teachers of routine tasks, supporting teachers and being an extra pair of hands, and supervising pupils, giving them extra support and keeping them on task. Respondents pointed out that classroom assistants were:

> *Taking admin activities away from teachers so that more preparation time can be spent planning teaching. Working with groups on activities that often don't get done by class teacher so that CT can spend time on children learning and teaching.*
>
> Class teacher

> *a) Giving teachers time to teach by relieving them of administrative tasks b) keeping 'distracted' pupils on task without disrupting lessons*
>
> Education authority representative

> *Being an additional adult in the school for teacher support/pupil supervision inside and outside the classroom.*
>
> Headteacher

In a few cases, the most important contribution was closely related to particular needs in the school. Two headteachers explained that:

> *It* [classroom assistants initiative] *has allowed us to support the teachers of a very difficult class over two sessions. A small but significant number of these pupils may not have been able to be maintained in a mainstream setting without extra adult support within the classroom at all times.*
>
> Headteacher

> *Removing pressure from teaching staff in a small school where 3 full-time teachers (including HT) are often only adults in school: answering telephone/door when secretary is not in school, attending to minor injuries is often as important as actual support in class.*
>
> Headteacher

2.5.1 Views of respondents without classroom assistants

The headteachers and class teachers without classroom assistants were asked to identify the contribution they thought classroom assistants might make. Their responses were very similar to those with classroom assistants, which suggests that, at least in this respect, reality matched teachers' expectations.

2.5.2 Classroom assistants' views on their contribution

Classroom assistants were asked what they felt was their most important contribution to date, and again the majority of responses were very similar to those identified by teachers and headteachers. A number of the classroom assistants also pointed out that their willingness to be flexible and their ability to relate well to staff and pupils were important contributions which they could offer. As two put it:

> *I believe my willingness to be flexible in my approach to the job has not only allowed teaching staff to concentrate more on teaching but has also been to the overall good of the school.*
>
> Classroom assistant

I feel the most important contribution is the way I relate to the children and staff.

Classroom assistant

Only one out of 95 classroom assistants responded negatively:

At the moment I don't feel I make an important contribution because I am not being used to my full potential.

Classroom assistant

2.6 Concerns about the initiative

The survey questionnaire encouraged education authority representatives, headteachers and class teachers to express any concerns they had about the initiative. Just over half of the headteachers and class teachers and three-quarters of the education authority representatives did so. We consider each in turn.

2.6.1 Education authority concerns

Education authority representatives, as might be expected, focused primarily on funding, with a few highlighting the need for training.

Funding

Some were concerned about how the initiative would be funded in the future.

Lack of clarity about how the initiative will be funded after Phase 3 of the Excellence Programme.

Education authority representative

Others were preoccupied with present funding arrangements.

Insufficient funding to extend the initiative further across the authority.

Education authority representative

The low pay which has resulted in considerable turnover of staff.

Education authority representative

Training

Both the standard and timing of available training for classroom assistants were causing some concerns for education authorities, in particular the mismatch between the start of the initiative and the provision of training.

It is our understanding at the moment that the CA qualification will be SVQ II. This is, we feel, too low and should be revised to SVQ III.

Education authority representative

School-funded classroom assistants

Some headteachers have employed additional classroom assistants out of the school's devolved budget and education authority representatives are concerned that these school-funded assistants may not be offered the same training opportunities as those funded from the main initiative. It may also be difficult for authorities to maintain accurate records of the number of support staff in schools.

2.6.2 Headteacher concerns

Headteachers' concerns were two-fold: they worried about funding and training for their classroom assistants, but also about managing the boundaries between assistants' and teachers' roles.

Funding

A number of headteachers expressed concerns that teachers' expectations may not have been fully realised. One shared the education authorities' anxieties about the future of funding for the initiative.

> *I am concerned that this initiative could cease if funding is withdrawn.*
> Headteacher

and others pointed to the limitations of present provision:

> *Expectations not realised. Teachers thought they'd all be getting 1 each! (full-time)*
> Headteacher

> *Time should be given so that consultation and* ***exchange*** *of information can take place. More hours for Classroom assistant.*
> Headteacher

> *Salary too small, therefore we will lose good staff.* Headteacher

Training

Training issues also concerned headteachers:

> *Staff* ***must*** *be quality and must receive quality training and support.*
> Headteacher

Others pointed out that relying on school to fill any gaps in training was difficult in the time available:

> [There is a] *lack of time re training CA on classroom routines and activities*
> Headteacher

> *Some assistants need considerable support - can become a burden* [on the school].
> Headteacher

Remit

A number of headteachers were concerned that classroom assistants should not overstep their remit. This was variously expressed as:

> [There is a] *danger of CA teaching - this has to be closely monitored.*
> Headteacher

> *They* [classroom assistants] *must not be a replacement for admin/office staff.*
> Headteacher

> *Will they become SEN auxiliaries by another name?* Headteacher

Example 2.1: Setting boundaries between teaching and supporting

One of the case study headteachers felt that it was easier to set out clear boundaries for the classroom assistant's role with a relatively untrained person; whereas there may be a shadowy divide for nursery nurses. The classroom assistants at that particular school were not afraid to ask 'Is this within my remit?' One, for example, had a background working in industry and had a different perspective on being trained than is perhaps usual in education. She expected clear guidelines on what she should be doing. The headteacher explained that:

> *Schools, I think, tend to fudge some of that stuff. Don't make it too explicit and too clear and 'don't ask and I won't tell' kind of stuff, if it's going over the boundary. And sometimes it is a very difficult boundary, between teaching and supporting.*

2.6.3 Class teacher concerns

For class teachers the most common area of concern related to the remit of classroom assistants and clearly this is an issue which needs to be addressed. Others were concerned about how classroom assistant time was being allocated within the school. A minority mentioned their training and future funding.

Remit

Many teachers expressed concerns about the role and responsibilities of classroom assistants and their ability, as individuals, to meet their remit. This reflects the fact that teachers are most affected by the day to day activities of the classroom assistants.

For some the boundaries between teaching and assisting are not clear:

> *Sometimes the line between what is teaching and should be done by the teacher and what is reinforcement/practice and can be done by the CA is rather hazy.*
>
> Class teacher

Others thought that some classroom assistants may overstep these boundaries:

> *I would worry that we may get someone in the future who tries to 'take over' the role of teacher or doesn't relate well to other teachers and or children.*
>
> Class teacher

A wide variation in teachers' perceptions of the role of classroom assistants emerged. This is exemplified by the following:

> *Classroom assistants seem to have difficulty supporting pupils and often do not know how to support them in their learning.*
>
> Class teacher

> *Some teachers are concerned about giving the classroom assistant all the "boring jobs" to do – photocopying, filing etc. I feel their role has to be more clearly defined.*
>
> Class teacher

> *They could well be abused and are very poorly paid to become assistant teachers!*
>
> Class teacher

> *An unsuccessful CA can be more work for the class teacher and end up causing her/him more work. Better screening procedures are required.*
>
> Class teacher

Allocation of time

Time, or lack of it, and its allocation was a concern for a number of teachers.

> *Schools appear to use the assistants in different ways. We lose a lot of class time, when the assistants could be working with group/individuals, when they are called upon to supervise dinners, playgrounds etc.*
>
> Class teacher

> *The school must consistently allow you their time. It's hopeless if you don't know when they are coming.*
>
> Class teacher

> *As I stated already I am concerned about the lack of time for discussion between teacher and CA. I often feel I give directions in a curt manner simply because I am probably teaching at the time.*
>
> Class teacher

Training

Training was another area of concern for class teachers. The amount of training given or offered to assistants varied amongst authorities, but in some cases it was clearly seen as inadequate:

> *Perhaps classroom assistants ought to have training which lasts more than an induction day. ...This job requires many skills and it is unfair to classroom assistants to expect them to have all these skills without training.*
>
> Class teacher

And nor could class teachers themselves fill this training need:

> *... untrained staff create rather than lighten the load.*
>
> Class teacher

Funding

A few teachers expressed concerns about the funding of the initiative. Some did not wish it to end, while others believed there were too few assistants to be effective. In contrast, one teacher, a minority voice, drew attention to the possible adverse effects on the pupils of having too many adults in a classroom:

> *In some instances could result in having too many adults in room making children too dependent.*
>
> Class teacher

2.6.4 Concerns identified by respondents without classroom assistants

Not surprisingly, the main concern of headteachers and teachers who were not participating in the initiative was that they might be excluded from its benefits. In particular, those in small schools believed that their pupils were missing out:

> *Small schools always seem to be the last to receive any similar support despite the fact that the teaching of 4 stage composite classes brings a lot of difficulty in meeting the needs of <u>all</u> pupils.*
>
> Headteacher

However, staff in larger schools also spoke out:

> *We have only benefited from one extra member of staff in this large school. How fair is this?*
>
> Class teacher

2.7 Discussion

Large numbers of classroom assistants have been appointed to date under this initiative, and from the evidence presented above we conclude that very few instances of unsuccessful appointments have emerged. But this may not always be the case. A major contributing factor is that the majority of assistants had previous experience in schools, often within the school to which they were appointed. This not only contributed to the classroom assistant's contextual knowledge of the school but also minimised the possibility of mismatches between school and assistant. It will be interesting to see whether there are sufficient experienced people to meet future needs.

Most classroom assistants have some educational qualifications. Some are qualified nursery nurses or hold other qualifications in child care, and a few are former teachers. There is no indication that this initiative was having an impact on supplies of staff for pre-school positions. However, there were hints from some respondents that the classroom assistants initiative might impact on the supply of special needs auxiliaries. This is an area which education authorities will need to monitor closely.

The majority of classroom assistants are women. Thus any hopes that this initiative might provide a way to address the gender imbalance in primary schools by attracting male applicants from the New Deal Programme are not being met.

While many classroom assistants work full-time, others are working as little as one hour per week. There are indications that shorter hours may be linked with job dissatisfaction for classroom assistants and give rise to organisational problems for teachers. This situation should be monitored as it may have implications for how authorities wish to allocate their resources in future in terms of the balance between number of posts and contracted hours for each post.

We gathered evidence that many classroom assistants aspire to teacher teaching. So far the numbers leaving their posts to start training are small, but may rise over time as classroom assistants gain confidence. This may have an adverse effect on the supply of classroom assistants in the longer term or alternatively, the post of classroom assistant may be viewed as a useful 'access route' into a career in teaching. Nonetheless, difficulties may arise for pupils, schools, teachers and authorities if the turnover is too high. Pupils clearly benefit when there is an established relationship between teachers and classroom assistants, and mobility of classroom assistants may strain these growing relationships.

Not only education authorities, but also some headteachers and teachers were concerned about the future funding of the initiative. The anticipated ending of Excellence Funding may be inhibiting long-term planning.

Training is another area of concern, both the time-lag between the beginning of the initiative and the provision of suitable training materials for classroom assistants and also the variation in availability of training opportunities. Some

school staff are concerned that they are expected to bridge the gap by offering training at school level.

Finally, the remit of the classroom assistant was felt to be too unclear by some. There are still difficulties for some schools in defining the boundaries between teaching and assisting. And in other cases there seems to be tension within schools over the way in which classroom assistants' time is allocated. Their use in playground supervision, first aid and general administrative support takes them out of the classroom. Where this happens at short notice it can create difficulties for the teachers who were expecting them in class.

2.8 Summary of findings

- By August 2000 there were almost 2500 classroom assistants in post in Scottish primary schools. They worked between one and 30 hours per week
- Most classroom assistants in our sample were women and more than half were aged between 35 and 44 years
- Approximately one third of the sample had qualifications in childcare
- The majority of the sample had had previous experience in schools, many as parent helpers and general or special needs auxiliaries
- Most of the classroom assistants were very satisfied with their job, the hours and conditions in their schools
- Approximately a quarter of the sample classroom assistants aspired to becoming a teacher in the future, while approximately half had no aspirations to develop their careers further at this time
- Others classroom assistants were working towards, or looking for opportunities to work towards, qualifications which were relevant to their current post
- The majority of class teachers, headteachers and education authority representatives were very satisfied with the impact of the classroom assistants initiative
- Teachers perceived that classroom assistants had reduced the pressure on them by relieving them of routine tasks and freeing up more time for teaching
- Pupils were offered a wider range of learning experiences including more interaction with adults, increased practical activities, games and reinforcement of learning
- More than half of the respondents who were less satisfied with the impact of the initiative identified the small amount of time spent with the classroom assistant as the reason for their dissatisfaction
- Other less satisfied respondents referred to the varying abilities and personalities of the individual classroom assistants, the need to provide

them with more training, and to ensure that time for liaison and planning between classroom assistants and class teachers is available

- Concerns about the initiative focused on funding, training, role clarification and allocation of classroom assistant time
- Those teachers without classroom assistants were concerned that their pupils were being deprived of possible benefits: a number in both small and large schools also felt they had been allocated insufficient numbers of assistants.

3: Managing implementation

3.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the implementation of the initiative both by education authorities and within individual schools. It looks at how classroom assistants have been recruited and deployed and how they are being supported and trained.

3.2 Recruitment

3.2.1 Recruitment and selection

The relatively large numbers of posts created as a result of this initiative have made considerable demands on those involved in the recruitment process. While many education authorities have taken on much of the administrative load, headteachers and sometimes other school staff have been included in the final selection of classroom assistants. In a few cases the authority handled the whole process which prompted one headteacher to remark:

> *I would prefer to have been involved. The process* [of selection] *was completely central.*
>
> Headteacher

A summary of those involved in recruiting classroom assistants in the 28 authorities who responded to our survey is presented below.

Table 3.1: Who is involved in the different stages of recruitment and selection?

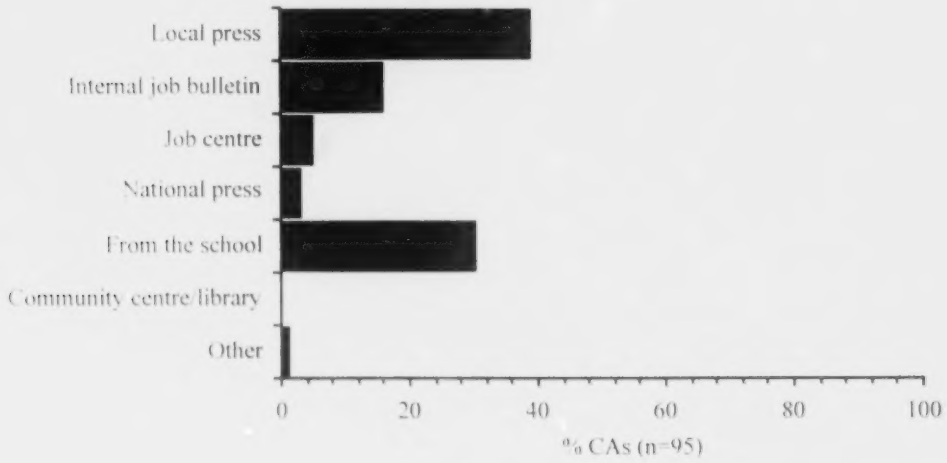
	Advertising	Shortlisting	Selection
EA personnel/office staff	28	11	12
EA advisors/CA co-ordinators	10	15	13
Headteachers from schools involved	28	23	26
Other school staff	28	6	1

NB: Figures are numbers of authorities out of a total of 28

Advertising the posts

As Table 3.1 shows, posts were advertised both by the education authority and by the schools. Many education authorities believed that advertisements in the local press attracted the most suitable candidates, and this is confirmed by feedback from classroom assistants, many of whom had heard about their post in this way.

Figure 3.1: Where surveyed classroom assistants heard about the post



While authority representatives reported that advertisements in Job Centres and internal job vacancy bulletins were the next most effective method of recruitment, many classroom assistants in post suggest that contact with the school was more important. This ties in with the fact that about half of the classroom assistants appointed during the first phase had some previous connection with the school. But this trend may not continue.

Numbers of applicants

The numbers of applicants for posts varied widely, both within and between authorities. For example, one authority had had over 200 applicants for one post but on average received 50 applicants for posts in urban schools and only two or three applicants for rural schools. This pattern was identified by a number of other authorities. Part time posts and ones specifying particular abilities also appeared to be less popular. It is interesting to note that the classroom assistants we surveyed were equally divided between those living within or close to the school catchment area and those living outside the school catchment area.

There are also indications in some education authorities that the number of applications is falling:

> *The first batch of applications in June 1999, was large; in excess of 130 applications for one full-time post. The second batch was roughly 1/3 the size for 9 1/2 hours post.*
>
> Headteacher

> *Applications for the Aug 2000 permanent post were very few because it was advertised as a Bilingual Classroom Assistant able to speak URDU/PUNJABI.*
>
> Headteacher

The quality and suitability of applicants also varied as the following comments indicate:

Over 40 applicants with wide range of experiences from housewife to fully qualified teachers.

Headteacher

We had lots of applicants but not many with qualifications.

Headteacher

Considerable response in terms of applications. A very good selection to choose from.

Headteacher

Example 3.1: Defining suitable applicants

Perceptions of what constitutes a suitable applicant also varied. Many headteachers and teachers had previous experience of working with nursery nurses or other adults and had developed views of what their particular school required from a classroom assistant. One candidate who had trained as a nursery nurse believed that it stood her in good stead for her current role:

I would like to stress that the Nursery Nurse course has helped a lot. I don't know how other classroom assistants who aren't trained, how they cope.

The class teacher explained how she was:

... used to working with somebody because I've worked in the nursery. So I'm used to working as a team with a nursery nurse. And doing all my planning with the nursery nurse, who would have known exactly what was required for that particular day. And again working independently and using her own initiative.

This same teacher had had a successful experience with a parent helper, who she believed may be exceptional:

In this area we always have to remember that the parents that we might get from this area have not had the schooling and education that some of the parents might have had in another school.

Shortleeting and selection

Most education authorities used a person specification for shortleeting applicants. Common elements of many of these required the classroom assistant to have a good level of education, particularly in literacy and numeracy; experience with children; good interpersonal skills and ability to work with others. In addition a smaller numbers of authorities specified qualifications or experience of first aid; experience of office work, particularly with computers; organisational and planning skills and ability to use initiative; and skills with practical tasks and mounting displays. A few authorities also specified personal attributes including a willingness to undertake training, to be flexible and adaptable, and one authority specified that applicants should have a sense of humour.

As can be seen from Table 3.1 above, the majority of authorities involved headteachers in the shortleeting and selection process.

HT screens applicants against employee specification, invites candidates for interview and selects successful candidate(s).

Education authority representative

In some cases authorities first carried out a sift of the applications to reduce the time required from headteachers: other authorities remained involved in the process to its conclusion, working together with headteachers to interview and

select appointees. Several authorities formed panels of headteachers for the selection process, to reduce the demands on them. There is some evidence that headteachers would prefer to be involved in appointments to their own school:

> *Selection* [of classroom assistants] *was done by panel on an area basis. I was one of 3 HT selecting for 14 schools. I would prefer to interview for my own school rather than use a panel to select for my school.*
>
> Headteacher

3.2.2 Terms and conditions

Terms and conditions of appointment varied across authorities. Twenty-one of the 28 authorities appointed some classroom assistants on permanent contracts; eleven offered temporary contracts and seven used time-limited fixed term contracts. In one case the nature of the permanent contracts specified that the assistant was 'employed by the Council but not contracted to individual schools'. Another authority explained that assistants move from a temporary to a permanent contract 'once they have completed training and given satisfactory service'. In two authorities the fixed-term contracts ran until 2002; presumably, though this was not actually stated by these authorities, to the end of the Excellence funding.

In most authorities classroom assistants are employed to work school terms only, plus 5 in-service days and holiday entitlements. A small number of authorities say they employ classroom assistants for 52 weeks of the year. In some of these cases the hours are annualised but assistants are only expected to work school terms and in-service days – effectively the same arrangement as most others. However, in at least one case assistants have to put in some time out of school hours. There was some dissatisfaction with the terms and conditions of employment as one classroom assistant explained:

> *I feel strongly that the hours we do, including training, for the remuneration is worthy of the same "time off" at holiday times throughout the year as other professionals: teachers, Nursery Nurses in school, nursery etc. If you wish to keep well motivated, enthusiastic and dedicated classroom assistants then I feel it is very wrong to ask CAs to "make up" hours outwith a normal 8.15–4.15 type day.*
>
> Classroom assistant

Although the authority planned to change the arrangement for all new appointments, they faced difficulties working out how to improve the situation for their existing classroom assistants.

Weekly hours

Although the hours which classroom assistants work vary, the largest number work between 21 and 30 hours per week. Twelve authorities employ substantial numbers of classroom assistants (about 1000 in total) for 27.5 hours per week. This allows 2.5 hours per week for planning and development including liaison with class teachers. Ten authorities have issued contracts for 25 hours per week, the time most primary pupils spend in school. Only two authorities employ any assistants for more than 30 hours per week; nonetheless there are about 80 assistants working this length of week. However, some of these are qualified

nursery nurses working in Primary 1 and 2 classes to support Early Intervention. Approximately 90 classroom assistants, the majority from just three authorities, are employed for 5 hours or less per week.

Factors affecting salary scale point

The most frequent determinant of where on the salary scale classroom assistants are placed is their current length of time in post; 16 authorities use this criterion. Five authorities take account of qualifications held by assistants when appointed and three make awards for qualifications gained in post. A number of authorities indicated that as the PDA for classroom assistants becomes available they will review their position.

3.2.3 Staff turnover

All but one education authority reported some classroom assistant turnover since the inception of the programme. The scale of the problem is small, affecting only 160 classroom assistants (6.5%) of the 2500 classroom assistants now employed by Scottish education authorities. However, in one large authority, which employs several hundred classroom assistants, there have been 80-90 resignations. There were apparently two main reasons:

> *some left due to poor salary.*
> *some left as job was not what was depicted.*
>
> Education authority representative

Reasons for leaving include dissatisfaction with the job and/or pay; changes in family or personal circumstances, to undergo further training, to take up other posts in the education sector including in other schools as classroom assistants, nursery nurses, special needs auxiliaries or administrative support workers.

3.3 Deployment

3.3.1 Authority level allocation

There was considerable variation between the authorities in the way they deployed classroom assistants. Initially many authorities gave all primary schools at least one classroom assistant without applying any criteria for deployment. In other authorities funding has not been sufficient to employ an assistant for every school, or other factors have been given priority. These criteria include adult:pupil ratios (54% of authorities), teacher:pupil ratio (21% of authorities) and school roll (39% of authorities). Over a third (36%) of authorities took account of socio-economic factors when allocating classroom assistants; a quarter (25%) recognised the needs of small schools with teaching headteachers, and about one-fifth (21%) took account of the needs of schools with large composite classes. One authority identified 'meeting/addressing SEN' as a factor and another '5–14 literacy and numeracy data'.

Guidance to schools

Most of the authorities (89%) said that they gave schools some guidance about how they should deploy classroom assistants and the majority circulated the SOEID implementation guidance as well as booklets developed by the

authority. A small number of authorities held briefing sessions for headteachers, or were available for ongoing advice. Three authorities indicated that schools were advised to place classroom assistants in early stages classrooms, to support or complement work in early intervention. However, one of these three had recently changed its advice and asked headteacher to 'use them at the stages most appropriate.' Another authority included in its guidance notes for schools a recommendation that classroom assistants should work in one or at most two classes. And unusually, two authorities specified how classroom assistants should allocate their time.

> *Schools are advised to deploy CA as follows(at least) 50% of time working with children. Remainder spent on other duties.*
>
> Education authority representative

3.3.2 In-school allocation

In most of the schools we surveyed, allocation of the classroom assistants' time was the responsibility of the headteacher, often in consultation with others. In a few cases the responsibility was delegated to a depute or assistant headteacher. The majority of schools allocated their classroom assistants to more than one class, and in most cases a fairly structured timetable had been worked out.

Example 3.2: Rigorous timetabling to share classroom assistant time

In this school the headteacher believed rigorous planning and timetabling produced effective results.

> *... I emphasise fairness in the priorities and why classes are targeted for assistance. There is a stable staff here and they get to know the curriculum at a particular stage and they know that if they have a big class their chance will come ... I am always asking teachers and classroom assistants: how are you going? Is the timetable okay?*

The classroom assistant explained her schedule and its planning implications for class teachers:

> *As a classroom assistant, I go to all seven classes. I have a timetable 3/4 hour, twice a week for each class ... Because I have a timetable the teachers know when to expect me. The class teacher has a small note book into which they write the things for me to do. It is very helpful.*

A class teacher commented that their main opportunity to talk together is at lunchtime.

Pupils were aware that their class only received support for two sessions per week but appreciated her help. One girl reported that:

> *She* [the classroom assistant] *is not in class that often ... twice a week. She helps us when we get stuck ... In case you don't get it ... Today she helped me with the Style game. She helped me with knowing what to do. She said do the opposites ... say it said 'up' you had to look for 'down'...*

Almost half of the headteachers in our sample also targeted classroom assistant time to classes where there were pupils or groups with particular needs and more generally to classes in the early stages of the primary school. In larger schools with two or three assistants, a common approach was to assign each assistant to classes at a different stage – early, middle and upper.

Example 3.3: Focussing classroom assistant on one stage

One headteacher described the reasons for allocating a classroom assistant exclusively to each stage as follows:

> ... [the reasons include] *long periods of time being settled, and getting to know the children and children knowing them well and respecting them, is making a difference in what can be achieved. ... The concept is that they will stay there, though there may be an opportunity to move around if they wish, rather than always be P1/2 assistants, for example.*

Until recently this school had been allocated one classroom assistant and the headteacher had found it much harder to allocate the assistant's time or to see what difference she had made 'except against the teachers' stress level!'

Approximately a third of headteachers deployed classroom assistants to classes in which they believed the ethos or behaviour would improve or in which the assistant's specific skills could be put to best use.

How classroom assistant time is shared out

Classroom assistants in our survey reported working in from just one to more than five classes (see Table 3.2 below). Approximately one fifth (22%) of them worked in more than five classes each week, and three of these were only employed for 11–15 hours per week.

Table 3.2: Number of classes worked in by surveyed classroom assistants(n=95)

Number of classes	Number (%) of classroom assistants
1	14 (15)
2	11 (12)
3	17 (18)
4	13 (14)
5	19 (20)
>5	21 (22)

Teachers reported receiving varying amounts of support from classroom assistants. This ranged from 30-40 minutes to more than 25 hours per week, more than half (56%) receiving five hours or less per week. Only five teachers (7% of our respondents) received more than 20 hours support per week: one had 22 hours, two had 25 hours and two had more than 25 hours. Eleven (14%) of the teachers had classroom assistants who worked exclusively in their class, but for six of these the classroom assistant worked only half of the week or less.

Clearly, there is an association between teacher satisfaction with the initiative and the level of classroom support they receive. A greater proportion of those teachers receiving 5 hours support or less per week were only somewhat satisfied compared with those receiving larger amounts of support.

Timetabling could also be problematic. Most of the classroom assistants had a timetable of where they would be working, and some also had the class teachers' timetables. For just over half (54%) of the teachers who responded, the

classroom assistant was assigned to their class for the session, and for another quarter for the term. But some teachers annotated the questionnaire to the effect that the timetable was to be reviewed at the end of the term or session and almost a quarter (22%) indicated that they did not know how long the present classroom assistant timetable would continue. Some of this uncertainty may be attributable to a bedding down of the initiative.

3.4 Support and training

3.4.1 In-school support

The amount and type of in-school support offered to classroom assistants appears to vary considerably. The following two comments illustrate the range of experiences:

> *My assistant head has been a great support to me. She has helped me with my SVQ and is always prepared to help with any problems I come across.*
>
> Classroom assistant

> *I have found that working closely with the other classroom assistant and auxiliary and office staff I have managed to find out what I'm meant to do.*
>
> Classroom assistant

Classroom assistants were asked to indicate how useful they found different types of in-school support. As can be seen from Table 3.3 below, apart from induction training, more than half indicate that they have not had any training.

Table 3.3: Classroom assistants' experiences of in-school support (n=95)

	Very useful %	Somewhat useful %	Not at all useful %	Have not had this %
Induction information	44	40	3	11
Planning meetings with class teacher(s)	38	15	0	44
Progress meetings with AHT/DHT	22	12	0	55
Progress meetings with HT	27	13	0	56
Whole school staff development	22	16	0	58
In-school development	26	13	0	59

On the positive side, induction information from the school had been received by the majority of classroom assistants. However, about one-tenth (11%) of the assistants said they had not received any and a very small number (3%) had not found this information to be useful.

Just over half of the classroom assistants had planning meetings with class teachers, of which the majority found them to be very useful. However, a large number (44%) of assistants said they did not have planning meetings with class teachers.

A little under half of the classroom assistants had progress meetings with either the AHT/DHT or the headteachers, had participated in whole school staff

development or in-school development for classroom assistants. For all these activities, no-one who had participated said they were not useful, and more believed they were very useful.

Headteachers in our survey reported organising a range of training opportunities for classroom assistants, included meetings with class teachers, management staff, other classroom assistants and support staff in the school and in some cases learning support or special needs staff. The purpose of these meetings ranged from regular discussions and planning with class teachers, through more general advice and support, to more formal monitoring of the activities of the classroom assistants.

A few headteachers said that classroom assistants always participated in whole-school planning and in-service meetings. However, the majority (71%) indicated that classroom assistants participated only occasionally, when the event was relevant to their needs or if they were available to attend. Topics identified as relevant to classroom assistants by various headteachers included ICT developments, and ethos-related approaches such as Promoting Positive Behaviour and Circle Time. One of the classroom assistants who had participated in school development activities commented:

> *In-service PAT within school has geared me to exactly my role here: knowing how and why we use initiatives is very helpful.*
>
> Classroom assistant

Planning liaison

The majority of classroom assistants (61%) reported that they were not allocated planning time with the class teachers with whom they worked. For the remainder (39%) the amount of time ranged from half an hour to three hours per week, with most having between one and two and a half hours. Most indicated that their tasks were assigned to them by the teacher when they arrived at the class. For the minority, who were able to meet with teachers out of class, work was assigned at the daily meeting. Approximately a quarter of the assistants (28%) said that they met occasionally with the class teacher to discuss their activities, and a few (8%) had weekly planning meetings.

This picture is confirmed by teachers, the majority (59%) of whom indicated that they met with classroom assistants for planning and liaison outside lesson times 'when we can find a little time'. Only a few teachers (11%) reported that they had set times for meeting with the classroom assistant, and almost a third (28%) said they never met with their assistants outside lesson times.

Clearly lack of planning can give rise to difficulties within the classroom. One third (33%) of the class teachers indicated that they had difficulties liaising with classroom assistants because of lack of time. In many cases the assistant's contract hours just did not allow discussion before or after school. Some teachers describe 'snatched moments at break time', but for others even this was not possible:

The classroom assistant does not begin until 9.00 am and finishes at 2.45 pm. She is on playground duty during interval/lunchtime. It is very difficult to plan or discuss particular problems.

Class teacher

Lack of time available to liaise with classroom assistants so consequently they are unaware of my overall aims.

Class teacher

Lack of joint planning could have repercussions on the kinds of tasks classroom assistants undertake. Forty per cent of the headteachers we heard from said that difficulties had arisen over making time available for planning and liaison between class teachers and classroom assistants. Others commented that this had to be fitted in at break and lunchtimes or by assistants being 'flexible' with their hours i.e. staying beyond their contracted time. For many of the headteachers who reported difficulties, the fact that the assistant was only in school during class times was again a key factor. One commented on the change from pilot to main programme:

During the pilot study the CA worked a full day (32 hrs/wk). Now the hours are less than pupils' and therefore time for consultation and planning with teachers is not available. This is very difficult and shortsighted as CA have much to offer.

Headteacher

Some schools have been experimenting with other approaches to making time available during the school day, using assembly times for meeting or asking senior staff to cover for colleagues:

[Time for meetings] *has to be timetabled and by using DHT to cover classes eats in DHT's timetable, however benefits outweigh difficulties.*

Headteacher

Monitoring

The majority of headteachers (85%) indicated that they were involved in monitoring the work of classroom assistants in the school. Others involved include class teachers (57%) and deputy headteachers (47%). Assistant headteachers were less often involved in this process (28%). Although the form of the monitoring varied across schools, a common approach involved daily or weekly meetings with the class teacher(s) and monthly or termly meetings with the headteacher or other member of the management team. A number of headteachers explained that diaries or logs of activities were kept and this was confirmed by half the classroom assistants. In addition a few headteachers indicated that classroom observation played a part in monitoring.

Informal monitoring in classroom by class teachers and promoted staff.

Headteacher

3.4.2 Training and development

As well as the induction information and support provided by individual schools, many classroom assistants had received induction training from the education authority and a considerable number reported that they were currently participating in further training.

Induction

Education authorities organised meetings or training courses for newly appointed classroom assistants. Almost half offered these before a classroom assistant took up their post; others offered these meeting in the first few weeks of their employment. All the classroom assistants in our sample had had contact with education authority personnel. About three-quarters of the assistants had attended induction training organised by the education authority and 35% believed it was very useful compared with only 5% who did not. Progress meetings had been less successful, with 63% of the assistants saying they were not very useful.

Further training received

Many education authorities offer training courses specifically targeted at classroom assistants. These include units for the new Professional Development Award (PDA Classroom Assistants) and courses on topics of relevance to the assistants, such as ICT, display and child protection. SVQ units in childcare were also offered by two authorities. The range of external training undertaken by classroom assistants in our sample is shown in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Classroom assistants' experiences of external training (n=95)

Type of training	Very useful %	Somewhat useful %	Not very useful %	Have not had this %
Development sessions from EA	17	16	0	58
Training related to PDA	27	23	2	38
Other college-based training	13	11	0	63

Again high percentages of classroom assistants report that they had not yet had training. The PDA related training was generally found useful, although one assistant felt that in-house training would better meet her specific needs. A number of assistants had found training on literacy and numeracy particularly helpful:

> *I have enjoyed and found very useful the courses on reading and maths. These have helped to give me an understanding of how these subjects are taught and how best to support the class teacher.*
>
> Classroom assistant

Other subjects identified as having been particularly useful include promoting positive behaviour, circle time, teamwork, managing challenging behaviour, special needs auxiliary course, and ICT. Opportunities to network with other classroom assistants was mentioned by a number of respondents.

Further training wanted

Approximately two-thirds (65%) of the classroom assistants surveyed identified other support or training that they would particularly like. Two-fifths of these were interested in courses on ICT and computer use; another fifth would like courses on art and craft and on presentation and display work for

projects. Other topics of interest to smaller numbers of classroom assistants include first aid; formally recognised qualifications such as the PDA; literacy, numeracy and Early Intervention; strategies to help with behavioural difficulties and with learning difficulties.

Four assistants felt the career structure is not clear at present and that they would welcome more information on salary scales, conditions and remit. Several others commented that they would like more time with teachers and other staff to plan and discuss their work.

One classroom assistant suggested:

> *Maybe the teachers could be given some sort of training on how to use CAs more effectively.*
>
> Classroom assistant

Training for managers and classroom teachers

Over a third (38%) of the headteachers we surveyed said that they had not received any training, support or guidance to help them manage the classroom assistants initiative in their schools. Approximately a third (30%) had attended meetings or training sessions which addressed the management of classroom assistants, although a number described these sessions as 'short' or 'brief'. Others had received written guidance, ranging from copies of the Scottish Office implementation guidance document to booklets specially produced by their authority. Almost all headteachers had found the support they had received to be useful.

Just over a quarter (28%) of the headteachers suggested ways in which headteachers could be trained. Others were interested in receiving guidance on how schools could organise induction and/or in-service training for classroom assistants and on the management and monitoring of classroom assistants. A number expressed an interest in learning about what other schools were doing:

> *Sharing of good practice in deployment of classroom assistant – always good to hear about other schools.*
>
> Headteacher

Almost two thirds (63%) of the class teachers we surveyed said they had not received any training, support or guidance in connection with the classroom assistants initiative. Of those who had, approximately a half had received it in written form. This ranged from a list of suitable tasks to more detailed guidance including 'ideas for using them most effectively in class'.

Other class teachers referred to discussions at PAT meetings, and a few had attended courses organised by their authorities on 'how to use the classroom assistant' and 'team work'; only a few of these were joint courses with the classroom assistants.

Headteachers and teachers identified activities which they thought would help them manage the initiative. The most common request from teachers was for more guidance and sharing of ideas and experience on how best to make use of classroom assistants. A number of headteachers also thought that this would be

useful. The most common request from headteachers was that teachers be given more guidance on the role of classroom assistants and the boundaries between teaching and supporting. A number of teachers also thought that this would be useful; they were still uncertain exactly what they could expect of classroom assistants. Several headteachers also identified a need for teachers to have more training on team working – delegating tasks and managing other adults in the classroom. One felt it was important for teachers to learn about:

> *Giving clear instructions to CA including expected outcomes from involvement with pupils on task.*
>
> Headteacher

Significantly, a number of teachers indicated that better training would not overcome structural problems such as the need for more time out of class for planning and liaising with their assistants; this was corroborated by several headteachers.

3.5 Discussion

Despite the expansion of the initiative, authorities have so far been able to find suitable appointees for all posts. There have been variations in the numbers of applicants, with posts in rural schools, part-time posts and those requiring special skills receiving fewer applicants than others. Some authorities have also experienced a decline in the number of applicants over successive waves of recruitment. These trends will continue to be monitored during the next phase of the evaluation.

Many authorities have shouldered much of the administrative burden involved in appointing classroom assistants, but headteachers and sometimes other school staff have played a part in the selection process. Most authorities have developed a person specification to assist with shortleeting candidates and ensure that suitable candidates are appointed.

Headteachers generally want to be involved in the selection of classroom assistants. They need sufficient information about candidates to ensure that a good match is achieved between the assistant and their school's requirements. In the only case of an unsuccessful match to emerge from this evaluation, the headteacher commented that the references had not been full enough. Many of the classroom assistants employed to date had a previous connection with the school to which they were appointed, or to a nearby school. This gave headteachers a clear picture of how they would fit into the school team. As this source of experienced candidates is exhausted, there may be fewer assistants in future with experience in the school and the potential for more mismatches. However, this may be offset by headteachers' greater experience of selecting classroom assistants.

Many authorities are giving at least some classroom assistants permanent contracts. Others are awarding temporary or time-limited fixed-term contracts. Concerns about the future funding of classroom assistant posts is an issue here. However, at least one authority which initially appoints assistants on

temporary contracts, is moving them to a permanent contract after they complete training and demonstrate satisfactory performance. There are also variations in the numbers of hours for which authorities typically employ assistants and the extent to which they take account of qualifications when determining salary levels.

So far, turnover of staff has been relatively low in most authorities. Those who have left have experienced changes in their personal circumstances, gone onto further training (including teacher training) or moved to other posts in schools, such as nursery nurse, special needs auxiliaries or clerical/administrative posts. However one authority in which there was a high staff turnover, believes that low salaries and/or unfulfilled expectations may be to blame. This particular authority may have advertised posts in a misleading way, but others have also had individuals leaving for very similar reasons. A few classroom assistants have moved to posts in neighbouring authorities where they perceive the terms and conditions to be more favourable. Terms and conditions offered by different authorities may thus become important factors in retaining high quality staff in the future.

Authorities have taken a variety of approaches to deploying classroom assistants. Adult or teacher to pupil ratios and school roll were the most commonly used criteria. The guidelines to accompany the initiative issued by the Scottish Executive may be ambiguous and these have variously been interpreted to mean that authorities should aim for a ratio of one adult to 15 pupils in every school, while others have produced an average ratio across all the authority's schools. This resulted in authorities placing different emphases on areas of social deprivation, the needs of small schools with teaching headteachers, those with large composite classes and other such factors in allocating classroom assistants.

In general authorities seem to give only general guidance on the deployment of classroom assistants within schools. Only two authorities recommend that assistants should be placed in the early stages; others leave it to schools to determine where they can be most effectively used. While there may be virtue in flexibility, it is significant that headteachers and teachers both indicated that they would like more information about the most effective ways to use classroom assistants. A number believed that although they were making good use of their classroom assistants, they were interested in hearing what others were doing. A sharing of effective practice both within and between authorities would maintain the current flexibility, whilst helping them to make better informed decisions about the most effective ways to use classroom assistants.

It is interesting to note that one authority has specified that classroom assistants should be used in one or at most two classes. The majority of classroom assistants surveyed were working in rather more classes than this and this results in them being able to provide only small amounts of support for individual teachers. This pattern of deployment is associated with reduced satisfaction with the initiative. There were a number of indications that time for planning and liaison between classroom assistants and teachers was in short

supply, and where this has to be shared between a number teachers the difficulties escalate. We will monitor the effects of increased numbers of classroom assistants and deployment patterns.

The amount of training available to classroom assistants seems to vary considerably. Most had received an induction training from the school and/or authority, but many had received little subsequent support. Only about half of the assistants participated in planning meetings with teachers, and few were involved in whole-school development activities on a regular basis. Most assistants found such activities useful, wherever they were available. External training was likewise found to be useful, but again there are question marks over its availability. It may be that training and support processes were not well-established for the classroom assistants who had only been in post for a few weeks (about half of our sample). We will follow up views of the availability and utility of training and support in the next stage of the evaluation.

3.6 Summary of findings

In summary, we found that the following factors affecting the management of the implementation of the initiative emerged at this stage of the evaluation:

- Advertisements in the local press and direct information from schools were the two most successful ways of attracting applicants for classroom assistant posts
- In general, posts in urban schools received more applicants than those in rural areas. Part-time posts and those specifying particular abilities also appeared to be less popular
- Some authorities reported a decline in the numbers of applicants for posts in later rounds of recruitment
- Some authorities have employed their classroom assistants on permanent contracts; others offer temporary or fixed-term contracts
- Classroom assistants' work ranges from one to over 30 hours per week. The majority of assistants are working either 25 or 27.5 hour weeks
- Authorities took a range of approaches to deploying classroom assistants. Some assigned at least one to every school; others did not have sufficient resources to achieve this or established other criteria for their deployment.
- Approximately half the authorities assigned classroom assistants on the basis of adult:pupil ratios in individual schools. Many took account of school rolls and socio-economic factors
- The majority of schools have assigned classroom assistants to work in more than one class; many have designed rigorous timetables in order to share classroom assistant support among all staff

- Approximately one-fifth of classroom assistants are working in more than five classes each week, including some who are employed on part-time contracts
- Teachers receive classroom assistant support in amounts ranging from 30-40 minutes to more than 25 hours per week. More than half receive support for 5 hours or less per week
- All but four classroom assistants in our sample had received some training and/or support in school; however, considerable numbers had received little beyond a basic induction process
- The majority of headteachers reported that classroom assistants participated in whole-school planning and in-service events occasionally or when relevant to their work. Topics considered to be relevant to classroom assistants include ICT developments and ethos-related approaches, such as Promoting Positive Behaviour and Circle Time
- Just over half of the surveyed assistants had planning meetings with class teachers; the majority of them found these very useful. These meetings varied considerably in length and regularity
- One third of class teachers reported difficulties with planning and liaising with classroom assistants; the most common cause being lack of time
- Teachers and headteachers thought that it was difficult to find times to meet with assistants whose hours of work meant that they were not available before or after school. Some were using assembly times or cover from senior staff to facilitate planning.
- More than half of the classroom assistants had undertaken training related to the PDA and the majority were finding this useful. Smaller numbers were involved in other types of external training
- Many classroom assistants indicated other training or support that they would like, including courses on ICT and computer use, art and craft, presentation and display
- Headteachers and teachers had had received limited support at this stage on how to manage the initiative; much was in a written format. Many were interested in sharing ideas on best practice with other schools.

4: Impact on schools and pupils

4.1 Introduction

In this section we provide an overview of the tasks classroom assistants are undertaking in classrooms and elsewhere in schools. We look at their interactions and relationships with teachers, pupils and other staff and discuss the impact they are having on teachers' time and on pupils' learning experiences, behaviour, attitude and attainment.

4.2 What do classroom assistants do?

4.2.1 Job descriptions and remits

Almost all of the classroom assistants who responded to our survey had job descriptions and even the two without formal job descriptions thought that their remit had been made sufficiently clear to them by their headteachers. In addition, the majority (85%) agreed that all the tasks they currently undertake fall clearly within their remit, with only 11 reporting that this was not the case. Their job descriptions are generally based quite closely, though with varying degrees of emphasis in different authorities, on the four main areas of support suggested in the guidance issued by the Scottish Office (SOEID 1999):

- effective organisation and use of resources
- quality of care and welfare of pupils
- quality of learning and teaching in the classroom
- effective access of pupils to the curriculum.

Many of the job descriptions are presented as a menu of appropriate tasks from which schools may select to meet their needs. However, some authorities are more specific about the focus of the classroom assistant role. For example, two specify that classroom assistants will work in P1 and P2 to support Early Intervention or literacy and numeracy more generally; two others indicate that classroom assistants should support pupils with special educational needs and another that they will provide 'learning support'.

Concerns with the remit

Although most classroom assistants felt that the tasks they undertook fell within their remit, almost one fifth expressed some concern about it. Their concerns were two-fold: first a small number believed that they were asked to undertake some tasks which were clearly outwith their remit; and, others were unhappy about the nature of the tasks. For example, several assistants indicated that they had been asked to cover when special needs auxiliaries and office staff were absent. Another undertook a regular hour per week of general office administration and more if other staff were absent. More controversially, one assistant reported that:

> *On a few occasions I feel I have been asked to act as a teacher and have only been able to cope because of my previous experience.*
>
> Classroom assistant: previously a teacher

Some classroom assistants were unhappy about the way their role was interpreted and indicated that they could be moved from one activity to another, as they were 'the staff members whose role/workload allows greater freedom of movement within the school'. Teachers echoed this concern as we discussed in section 2.6.3.

Other classroom assistants were unhappy about the nature of the tasks they were assigned under a clause in their job description which called on them to undertake 'any other duties required from time to time as requested by HT or her deputy'. This could include playground supervision. Some were dissatisfied with the balance of tasks as exemplified by one who reported that she spent more time on administration and photocopying than in the classroom. Another was not particularly involved with resources but 'work[ed] a lot with groups of children doing language or number activities'. Four assistants identified lack of clarity as a concern and this was shared by some of the teachers and headteachers (see Section 2.6.3).

4.2.2 Time spent on different activities

All respondents were asked to rank the activities most commonly undertaken by classroom assistants. For the most part the pattern of responses from classroom assistants, teachers and headteachers was very similar. By far the greatest numbers of respondents (95% overall) indicated that a large amount of classroom assistants' time was spent on 'supporting learning'. A majority in each group (62% of classroom assistants, 81% class teachers, 78% headteachers) indicated that the largest amount of classroom assistants' time was devoted to this activity. 'Classroom organisation' and 'socio-emotional support' were the next most frequent activities (indicated by 70% and 67% respectively) and just over half (54%) highlighted 'administrative support out of class'.

A mixed picture emerged regarding 'administrative support'; while clearly classroom assistants were undertaking administrative tasks outwith the classroom, little of their time was spent on administration within the classroom. Almost one-third of respondents (29%) reported that classroom assistants offered no support on administrative tasks such as taking the register or collecting money. 'Planning and development' also received little time; approximately one-sixth (16%) of respondents indicated that no classroom assistant time was spent on this.

Early Intervention activities

Approximately half of the assistants in our sample indicated that they support pupils in activities related to the Early Intervention programme in at least some of the classes they work with. By no means all assistants working with early stages classes were carrying out such activities and a few who worked only in

classes at the upper primary level believed that they were in fact supporting the Early Intervention initiative.

4.2.3 Approaches to supporting learning

As we saw above, the largest amount of classroom assistants' time is usually spent with pupils supporting their learning. Below we provide details of what this entails.

Table 4.1: How teachers say classroom assistants support learning (n=79)

	Yes %	No %
S/he mostly works with groups	82	11
S/he mostly works with individual pupils	47	44
S/he mostly oversees rest of class while teacher works with groups	23	67
S/he supports pupils in activities related to an area of expertise (eg ICT, art/craft)	66	23
S/he undertakes a wide range of tasks	82	10

Working with groups is the most common form of support for learning provided by classroom assistants, followed by working with individuals. However, the range of range of tasks they undertake is wide and many teachers are able to utilise the particular expertise of their classroom assistant to contribute to work in, for example, art, craft or ICT.

Classroom assistants' responses (see Table 4.2 below) confirm this work pattern.

Table 4.2: How classroom assistants say they work within classes (n=95)

	In most/all classes %	In some classes %	In one class %	In no classes %
I mostly work with groups	43	39	17	0
I mostly work with individual pupils	11	40	31	13
I mostly oversee rest of class while teacher works with groups	12	25	18	42
I supports pupils in activities related to an area of my expertise (eg ICT, art/craft)	25	38	12	21
I undertake a wide range of tasks	73	13	11	4

However, they do stress the wide range of tasks which they undertake and also variations in the way they work with different classes – both of which demand a high degree of flexibility from a classroom assistant.

Example 4.1: Range of tasks undertaken

This classroom assistant is timetabled to work in seven classes within one school on a variety of curriculum areas, including a bi-weekly rota to provide support for practical activities in mathematics. Teachers complete planning sheets, which indicate lesson type, activity and resources required for the subsequent week. The classroom assistant has time to prepare resources on Monday mornings. On Thursday afternoons the assistant is not allocated for class work and this time is used for administration and preparing displays. The classroom assistant indicates that:

> *I like the variety of going into many different classes. I prefer working with different classes. I like getting to know different children. There are different characters.*

She perceived that her role was to:

- Keep children on task
- Consolidate learning
- Read with small groups
- Support activities in literacy and numeracy with an emphasis on practical application
- Support ICT

> *I seem to have been nominated computer expert. All the IT problems come to me. If computers fail I can fix about 60% myself, otherwise I send them off to IT*

was how she put it. She is also organising a Book Evening together with another member of the support staff and liaises with parents and takes children in the minibus to play football with other schools.

4.3 Impact on teachers

4.3.1 Relationships between classroom assistants and teachers

The majority (80%) of class teachers found it easy to work with their classroom assistants, but a third (35%) had more negative experiences of working with other adults, such as specialist auxiliaries or volunteers. Thus it appears that teachers find it easier to work with classroom assistants than they do with other class helpers. Teachers commented on classroom assistants' flexibility, competence and initiative – all of which undoubtedly contributed to teachers' satisfaction with the initiative. In contrast, those who found it less easy to work with classroom assistants pointed to lack of time to plan adequately or the extra work required to do so, limitations in the abilities of particular assistants, and the need to adjust to working as a team as factors which had to be overcome. The problem of planning a session round a classroom assistant who was then used elsewhere in the school was raised again:

> *My classroom assistant is frequently accompanying other classes on trips etc in my allocated slot. Therefore, tasks I had for him to do can't go ahead as planned.*
>
> Class teacher

Classroom assistants were equally positive. The overwhelming majority (90%) felt they had good working relationships with class teachers, and the remainder believed these relationships were developing. Good relationships were

characterised by mutual respect, good communication, being made to feel a valued part of the team and supportive teachers and headteachers. Several assistants did, however, point to initial 'teething troubles' in establishing good relationships with teachers:

> *I feel teachers are gradually seeing classroom assistant as an 'assistant'. At first they were embarrassed being helped, but now it is like a team.*
>
> Classroom assistant

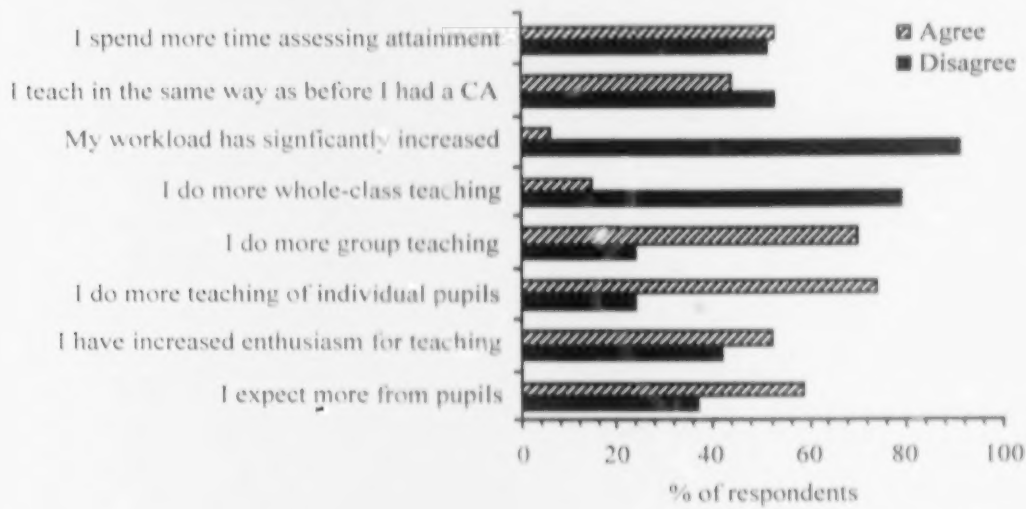
And working with several teachers compounded the issue:

> *I feel I have a good rapport with staff and, again, respect and trust has been gained on both sides. Difficulties can sometimes arise when I am withdrawn for other tasks if the teacher has planned an activity dependent on the extra help.*
>
> Classroom assistant

4.3.2 Teaching strategies

Teachers held a variety of views on the effects that classroom assistants had had on their teaching. As we can see from Figure 4.1 below the biggest impact appears to have been in the amount of time that teachers can now spend on activities with groups and individual pupils.

Figure 4.1: Teachers' views of the impact of classroom assistants on teaching approaches

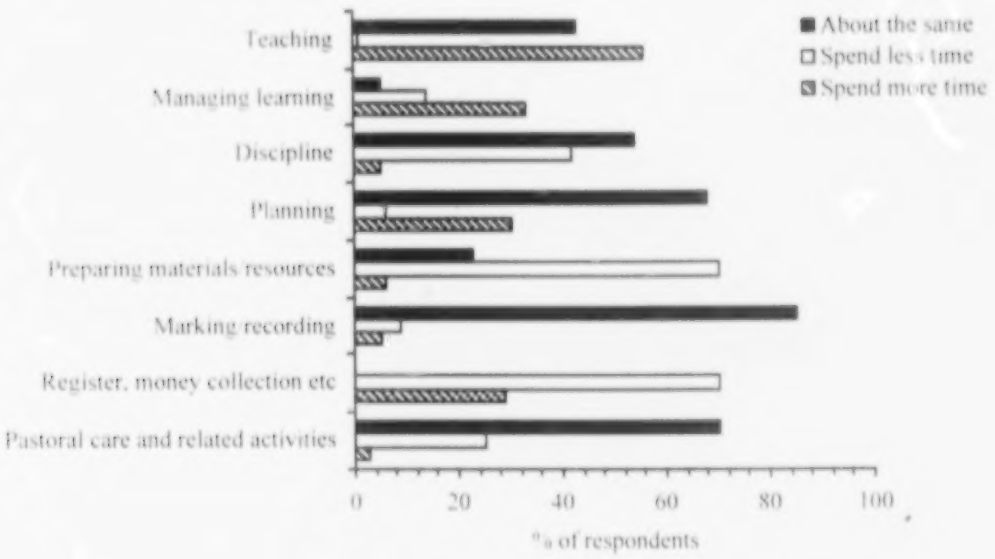


Other changes are in their attitude to teaching, with over a half indicating that they now expect more from pupils and have increased their own enthusiasm for the job. In addition, very few teachers felt that their workload had significantly increased as a result of having the classroom assistant.

4.3.3 Teacher time use

Classroom assistants appear to be having an impact on how teachers use their time. Teachers' responses are shown in Figure 4.2 below:

Figure 4.2: Changes to class teacher time spent on a range of activities



As might be expected, the majority of teachers with a classroom assistant are spending less time on preparing resources and on such tasks as taking the register and collecting money. Time spent on discipline and pastoral care has also been reduced for some. Approximately half of the teachers use the time gained on teaching; a third report allocating increased amounts of time to managing learning and planning. Least affected activities appear to be marking/recording and pastoral care.

Example 4.2: Impact on teacher time use

This is a small rural primary school with two composite classes and a teaching headteacher. Classroom assistants were perceived to have had a positive effect on teachers' use of time.

> *All sorts of things really ... that help the teacher focus on what she's doing. There aren't so many interruptions. You know, if something quickly has to be photocopied there's someone to do it. Also ... wall displays, things like that, that take hours of a teacher's time. Input to that, helping to prepare materials.*

The teacher of the early stages class reported that her planning was more thorough now that she is relieved of some routine tasks which she used to have to fit in after class hours:

> *Her* [the classroom assistant's] *presence has taken a lot of that kind of pressure way from me, practical pressure. So I think her presence has made a difference to my planning. I think that has become more tight, simply because my time has been freed up.*

The class teacher's plans are written in a diary which the assistant looks at when she comes in each morning; however, time to discuss the plans is hard to find:

> *Partly because of the way my hours are set* [9.15 to lunchtime at which point classroom assistant becomes lunchtime auxiliary] *we don't have time to sit down and talk apart from at break time. ...but we do talk as we're going along in the classroom, and she's usually explained to me what she wants to come out of an activity.*

Teachers in our survey elaborated on how they had used the time which they had gained by having a classroom assistant allocated to them. Most believed that it allowed them to spend more 'quality time' with pupils, especially in small groups or as individuals, while the classroom assistant was on hand to supervise the rest of the class and protect the teacher from interruptions.

> *I am freed from non-teaching tasks (photocopying, displaying etc) which enables me to get on with teaching. My day is less stressful, more enjoyable. Enthusiasm is increasing as I feel I can teach more effectively knowing I have time to explain tasks, to listen to children, to help them, to enjoy their company without rushing off to the next group.*
>
> Class teacher

In contrast only three teachers thought that the presence of classroom assistants had made no difference to their own use of time, and one indicated that time saving in one area was reallocated to another.

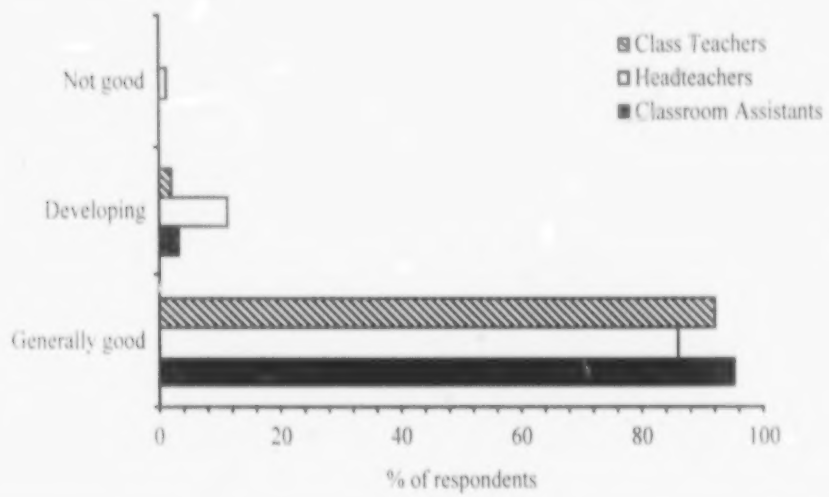
> *I spend less time on non-teaching duties eg preparation of classroom materials but more time planning the work of the classroom assistant in order to make her time useful and productive.*
>
> Class teacher

4.4 Impact on pupils

4.4.1 Relationships between classroom assistants and pupils

Most respondents believed that good relationships had developed between classroom assistants and pupils (see Figure 4.3 below).

Figure 4.3: Relationships between classroom assistants and pupils



Teachers described classroom assistants' relationships with children as good, firm, respectful, professional, friendly, encouraging, supportive, caring, sensitive. Some did indicate that it sometimes took a little time for such relationships to develop:

> *A 'professional' relationship – approachable but firm. This has to be established - get over the hurdle of over-familiarity, cheeky etc.*
>
> Headteacher

There are hints in our data that the background and prior experiences of the classroom assistants may have an impact, as may the school context. A number of the classroom assistants reported that children approach them with problems or with stories because they may be perceived as having more time to listen than teachers do. Playground duty was another opportunity to develop relationships.

Although the overall picture is positive, it should be noted that approximately one in ten teachers and a few headteachers and classroom assistants were more cautious in their assessment of developing relationships. Some, mainly newly appointed classroom assistants, reported that relationships were still developing. A few mentioned occasional difficulties with discipline and lack of respect from disruptive pupils. Particular situations may be more difficult for assistants to manage:

> *I am confident working with small groups, and can maintain discipline. They respond well in discussions etc. Larger groups are more difficult ...*
>
> Classroom assistant

And one teacher indicated that her classroom assistant had poor relationships with pupils:

> *Interaction with pupils is poor and CA requires constant support and encouragement.*
>
> Class teacher

Parent views of classroom assistant pupil relationships

A number of parents reported that their children appear to be fond of their classroom assistants and describe them as kind, helpful and cheerful.

> [Classroom Assistant] *helps with more personal things and my children like to talk to the assistants.*
>
> Parent

No parents reported any difficulties relating to the presence of classroom assistants.

4.4.2 Range of learning experiences

Overall class teachers, headteachers and education authority representatives believe that the classroom assistants initiative has improved the range of learning experiences offered to children. The majority of teachers indicated that with a classroom assistant present their pupils experience more adult/child interaction, more practical activities and spend more time on task.

Example 4.3: Supporting practical activities

The class teacher and the classroom assistant in this primary school have been working together for two years. The classroom assistant undertakes practical activities in mathematics with mixed ability groups. She rotates from group to group so that all have an opportunity to work with her. The classroom assistant is able to keep a group on task in a way which would be hard in a whole class context. As the teachers explains:

We are timetabled for two consecutive days each week. When I work on practical work it is more rushed and not much time. Our classroom assistant can take her time on practical work and talk them through it more.

During the observation of a P5/6 class, the classroom assistant was working on weight with a small mixed ability group of three girls and one boy. Each child took it in turn to estimate the weight of their chosen parcel and record this. They then checked the object's weight on the scales. Pupils said:

...we were enjoying it. We were weighing...Weighing boxes...a little surprised (at the weights)...Had to see if we got the exact weight of box...on testing we were just about right...

Also we had a game with cards and pictures...Like 830 grams ...it was fun...it let us learn more about how much weight had to come to...

4.4.3 Behaviour and attitude

Overall teachers were less convinced that the classroom assistants initiative had led to improvements in behaviour. Over half reported no change in behaviour; very few saw a great improvement, and one believed that behaviour was now worse. However, three quarters of the teachers felt there had been some improvement in pupils' motivation.

Headteachers were more positive about the impact classroom assistants had had on behaviour, with approximately a fifth feeling there had been a great improvement in pupils' behaviour and motivation, and most of the rest reporting some improvement. None perceived that either had deteriorated.

Example 4.4: Impact on pupil attitude

This school, in common with many others, described the main focus of the classroom assistant's role as supporting learning. The staff believed the classroom assistant had had a positive impact on pupil behaviour and attitude. One teacher commented that:

...by picking up on niggly behaviour, she has a calming effect

...more focused.... less chance to look out the window!

The classroom assistant also supervises at intervals and administers first-aid. The headteacher remarked that:

Pupils are more independent - they don't have to rely on the class teacher. They are more dependent in some ways as they see there is always someone there for them, 'a safety net' if you like...

Children are more likely to come to you with a gripe or a complaint. They are more comfortable approaching adults. This will develop further in the future...

All the education authority representatives thought there had been at least some improvement in pupils' behaviour and motivation. However, some responses were qualified by comments that they relied on anecdotal evidence. One pointed out that:

It's very difficult to attribute improvements to one initiative with accuracy.
Education authority representative

Parent views on attitude

Parents were unaware of any difficulties arising from the presence of the classroom assistants. In fact, approximately one fifth believed that the initiative had had a positive impact on their children's behaviour: children's increased confidence and enthusiasm for school had been noted.

> *They are much more confident within the classroom. They understand completely that they must ask someone if they don't know something.*
>
> Parent

The overall impression from the parents, who responded to our questionnaires, was that they knew relatively little about classroom assistants, especially in the larger schools, and much of what they did know came from the children not the school. As one parent remarked:

> *I would like more information about who is a student and who are the assistants - be able to meet them and take into account their views on the progress of children.*
>
> Parent

And another indicated that:

> *I think classroom assistants are a cheap way of "improving" education without cutting class sizes. This is not the proper way to establish a good grounding for life long learning.*
>
> Parent

4.4.4 Attainment

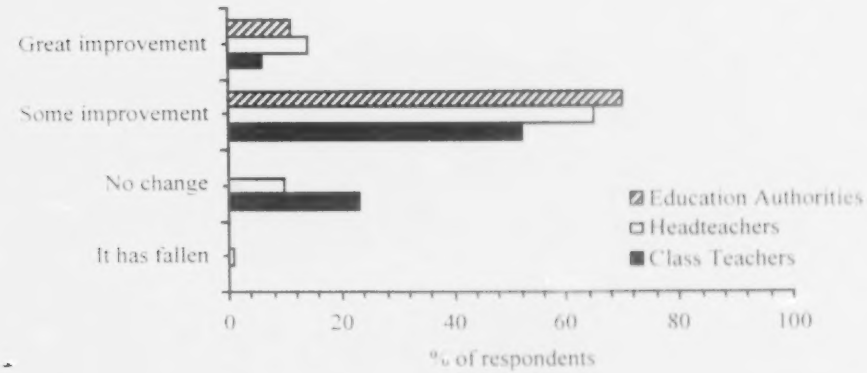
Because the classroom assistants initiative is running concurrently with a number of others which also aim to raise standards in Scottish schools, it is impossible to disaggregate the effects of each. The majority of our respondents were, however, able to specify some benefits but these may result from a combination of programmes.

Changes in level of pupil attainment

Overwhelmingly, education authority representatives, headteachers and class teachers thought that pupil attainment had improved since 1998 and approximately one in ten reported a great improvement (see Figure 4.4 below).

Headteachers and education authority representatives had a slightly more positive view about the effects on attainment than do teachers. Approximately a quarter of class teachers were unable to detect any change in pupils' attainment, and just one respondent, a headteacher, felt that attainment had worsened. Teachers used assessment of performance against 5–14 levels and National Test results to judge the impact of the programme on attainment. Some had evidence from standardised tests, mostly of reading and mathematics skills. It is worth noting that teachers and headteachers without classroom assistants were just as likely to perceive that pupils' attainment was improving.

Figure 4.4: Changes in pupil attainment since the session 1998-99



Factors influencing attainment

We asked our respondents to list the three most important influences on pupil attainment since 1998-99. Interestingly, the Early Intervention programme was most often identified first by education authority representatives and headteachers. The classroom assistants initiative and reduced class sizes in the early stages shared second place in importance for both groups except for those headteachers without classroom assistants. Target setting, new resources, teaching approaches and school initiatives on ethos, motivation, staff expectations, training and development were all highlighted as contributory factors by a number of headteachers, both by those who had classroom assistants and those who did not.

Teachers with classroom assistants were equally likely to identify either the Early Intervention programme or the classroom assistants initiative as the most important influence on pupil attainment. As would be expected those without assistants pointed to the influence of Early Intervention; however, overall considerably more teachers with classroom assistants included the classroom assistants initiative on their list than Early Intervention.

In summary, then, the majority of our respondents perceived the impact of the classroom assistants initiative on pupil attainment to be second or equal in importance to the influence of the Early Intervention initiative.

Example 4.5: Impact on pupil attainment

The staff in this small primary school highlighted ways in which they believed the presence of a classroom assistant was affecting pupils.

> *I get more 'quality time' with individuals and groups. ... She* [our classroom assistant] *certainly helps our time to flow. ... I can say definitely, that because I am getting more time with individuals and groups, that we are getting through more, and in more depth, particularly with the poorer ability groups. ... I'm certainly expecting the attainment targets to be met more quickly and perhaps more easily and comfortably. ... She also provides motivation for the children. It's nice for them to have somebody other than just me, to work with and to read to.*

They identified some benefits that were particularly relevant in a small school.

> *From my point of view as a classroom teacher, one is that in a small school it's someone with a different strength, and also the fact that children are having more focused attention more regularly than you would be able to have in a larger class. So it's the input, the reinforcement. I think that's probably the biggest factor in helping to raise attainment.*

The teacher had worked previously with an Early Intervention (literacy) assistant but felt that she gained more from the classroom assistant because of the flexibility of her role:

> *The classroom assistant for Early Intervention was purely for that and it was for literacy. ... She really was there for the reading. So I thought she had a speciality. Whereas* [CA] *I feel able to ask to do anything, and she wants to learn the variety of things. That's what I like.*

Parent views on impact of classroom assistants on attainment

Over half of the parents, who responded to our survey, agreed that classroom assistants had helped their children make progress. Many cited reading as an example:

> *My son has had extra help with his reading which has brought him on enormously.*
>
> Parent

Others mentioned writing and learning games. And a number believed that the individual attention which their children were getting when classroom assistants were present, raised children's confidence, their sense of security and direction, and reduced time 'wasted'. For example:

> *Another adult guiding and helping as an alternative to the main teaching sessions.*
>
> Parent

4.5 Other effects on school

4.5.1 Relationships with other staff

Only two classroom assistants mentioned that specific difficulties had arisen with other staff in their schools. In one case a more experienced classroom assistant felt resentment from her colleagues:

> *Resentment from 2 other classroom assistants as my job remit is slightly different, and because I have considerable experience in Youth Work. They seem unhappy when my opinion is asked by management.*
>
> Classroom assistant ((008)

The other classroom assistant was having to clarify her position with respect to the clerical staff in her school.

4.5.2 Practical difficulties

The pilot evaluations alerted us to occasional practical difficulties which may arise in some schools from the regular presence of extra staff. These included inadequate numbers of staff toilets to meet health and safety requirements, insufficient space in staff rooms, and insufficient car parking space. Respondents commented on these.

Education authority view

Few education authority representatives were made aware of such difficulties. Two mentioned "staggered" breaks being used because of crowded staff rooms. Pressure on car parking space was a growing problem, but classroom assistants were 'only one contributory factor'. One authority representative believed that:

> *On occasion,* [there are] *space difficulties in full classes where there is also individual SEN support etc.*
>
> Education authority representative

Headteachers' views

Forty per cent of headteachers had experienced some practical problems, and a number had introduced 'split intervals' to prevent overcrowding in the staff room. However, many comments indicated that the benefits of having classroom assistants far outweighed the disadvantages:

> *Staff room* [is] *already crowded - but help from new colleagues welcomed by all.*
>
> Headteacher

One headteacher was quite clear that these practical difficulties were secondary to relationships:

> *Crowding in staff room – already a poor facility. Same in car park. However, we feel it is imperative to accommodate CAs in staff room - for reasons of inclusion, ethos etc.*
>
> Headteacher

Others pointed to small classrooms and lack of space for working with groups, which were pre-existing conditions.

> *All the above! Especially in finding a work area they can call their own. The numbers of CA, clerical staff and SEN have grown from 4 to 9 in 3 years.*
>
> Headteacher

Classroom assistant view

Only 15% of the classroom assistants reported practical difficulties in their schools. Parking space was often a problem and several expressed concerns about having separate break times from other staff:

> *Due to playground duties I feel I miss a lot by not being in staff room with other members of staff. You don't know what is going on.*
>
> Classroom assistant

One assistant had similar feelings about being excluded from staff meetings:

> *I am not at any staff meetings and therefore do not know what is discussed or decided and question my perceived value in the school.*
>
> Classroom assistant

4.6 Discussion

Overall classroom assistants are seen to be having a positive impact on schools. Although many are experiencing some overcrowding and time is needed for the

induction and support of assistants, the majority of our respondents believe that the attendant benefits outweigh any disadvantages.

It is also evident that the role of classroom assistants is still evolving and it is premature to draw firm conclusions. Although most classroom assistants thought that their job descriptions or remits were clear, some teachers and some assistants expressed uncertainty about the remit. The main difficulties relate to different interpretations of the job description, the balance of activities classroom assistants undertake, and defining the boundaries between supporting and teaching. Many may disappear as both parties gain experience but others may require further discussion and negotiation to resolve them. We will monitor whether the numbers of such concerns diminish as classroom assistants become established in schools.

A related concern, highlighted by teachers and classroom assistants alike, was the possible conflict between demands on classroom assistant's time. Teachers expressed frustration that their allocated support could be reduced if their classroom assistant was called away to perform more general school duties on an ad hoc basis. This clearly disrupted planned activities. We will investigate whether this is inhibiting effective integration of the classroom assistant into activities within the classroom and how schools are monitoring and responding to such concerns.

It is striking that much classroom assistant time is directed to supporting learning within the classroom. There seems to be an expectation on the part of the majority of teachers, headteachers and classroom assistants that this is the major function of the role. In addition, assistants spend time preparing materials and resources, both in and outwith the classroom. While this releases significant amounts of teachers' time, it is perceived to be of secondary importance. With this emphasis on supporting learning, it is understandable that many teachers and classroom assistants would like more time together to plan. We will follow-up how schools overcome this difficulty, and also their views on the effectiveness of training to help classroom assistants to develop their role.

The presence of classroom assistants is widely perceived to offer a range of benefits to pupils. By keeping pupils on task and handling minor queries, they reduce interruptions to teaching sessions. The extra adult interaction contributes to pupils' confidence and self-esteem. One or two staff wondered whether pupils might become too dependent upon adults, but overall classroom assistants' relationships with pupils were mostly felt to be good. There were also indications that teachers found classroom assistants easier to work with than some other adults in the classroom. We will observe how relationships develop as all parties gain further experience of working together.

Many respondents felt that the classroom assistants initiative is already contributing to raising attainment, by freeing teachers to concentrate more on their teaching, supporting reinforcement activities and helping pupils stay on task. However, evidence was hard to find at this early stage of the initiative, and may continue to be in a climate of multi-policy initiatives. Overall our

respondents ranked the classroom assistants initiative as second or equal to the Early Intervention programme in its impact on attainment. We will continue to seek evidence to link classroom assistants with improved attainment

Practical difficulties in accommodating classroom assistants in schools appear generally to be regarded as minor. However, the use of split intervals as a way of dealing with overcrowded staff rooms and providing playground cover, may exclude assistants from the rest of the staff, with consequent effects on planning and teamworking. We will continue to explore the range of solutions which schools develop to meet this difficulty.

4.7 Summary of findings

- Most classroom assistants felt that their remit was clear and that tasks they were asked to undertake fell clearly within it
- The majority of teachers, headteachers and classroom assistants indicated that the largest proportion of classroom assistants' time is spent supporting learning
- Classroom organisation, socio-emotional support and administration out of class also took up large amounts of many classroom assistants' time
- About half of the surveyed classroom assistants were deployed to support Early Intervention activities for some of the time
- Classroom assistants undertake a wide range of tasks in classrooms, most often with small groups or individual pupils
- The majority of class teachers with classroom assistants found it easy to work with them and appreciated their flexibility, competence and initiative
- Factors which inhibit good working relationships include lack of planning time or the extra work required to plan, limitations in the abilities of particular assistants and the demands of working as a team
- The majority of classroom assistants felt they had good relationships with class teachers, and these were typified by mutual respect, good communication and team working
- Teachers indicated that classroom assistants allowed them to concentrate on teaching individuals and groups, to expect more from pupils and to increase their enthusiasm for teaching.
- Just over half the teachers indicated they spend more time on teaching when a classroom assistant is present; the majority spend less time on preparing resources and on tasks such as registration
- Relationships between classroom assistants and pupils were mostly thought to be good. Teachers described these as firm, respectful, professional, friendly, encouraging, supporting, caring, sensitive
- Teachers and headteachers believed that the classroom assistants initiative had led to an improvement in pupils' participation in activities and in the range of learning experiences offered to them

- The majority of teachers and headteachers felt there had been an improvement in pupils' motivation, and many thought behaviour had improved too
- Approximately one fifth of parents believed that the presence of classroom assistants had affected their children's attitudes positively; in particular they noticed increased enthusiasm and confidence.
- No parents were aware of any difficulties relating to the presence of classroom assistants, but some would have liked to know more about the initiative
- The majority of teachers, headteachers and education authorities think that there has been an improvement in pupil attainment since the session 1998. Early Intervention was most often identified as the primary influence, followed by the classroom assistants initiative and reduced infant class sizes
- Over half of the parents thought the presence of classroom assistants helped their children to progress with their school work.
- Minor practical difficulties had arisen in accommodating extra staff in some schools, but the benefits classroom assistants brought outweighed these.

5: Interim conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this section we consider the extent to which the aims have been met at this interim stage of the evaluation. Those aims relate to the impact of the initiative on pupil attainment, the utilisation of teachers' time and classroom interactions and learning experiences. Each is discussed in turn below. Finally, a number of issues that seem likely to be important for the continuing success of the initiative and which will inform the second round of data collection are highlighted.

5.2 Impact on pupil attainment

Has the classroom assistants initiative improved pupils' performance? This is the question, which as evaluators, we would like to be able to answer. Unfortunately, there is insufficient data. Only a few schools and education authorities provided records of pupils attainment with their questionnaire returns. Usually these referred to the National Testing targets but often were qualified by a proviso that the respondent believed that other initiatives and changes were impacting on attainment concurrently.

Many respondents explained why they did not feel able to provide any evidence relating to attainment at this stage. Some believed that it was too early to see improved attainment and hoped that evidence might be available at a later stage. However, other respondents felt that it was now impossible to disaggregate the effects of multiple policy initiatives, many of which aimed to raise pupil attainment. We found that at this stage our respondents generally perceive the classroom assistants initiative as second in importance to the Early Intervention programme in terms of its impact on attainment.

These difficulties of associating measured changes in attainment to specific intervention programmes will persist. In the absence of 'hard evidence' we are, therefore, identifying respondents *perceptions of the impact* of classroom assistants on pupil attainment. As we have already indicated, in this first round many respondents felt it was too early to comment on attainment. However, others were confident that over time the impact of classroom assistants on teachers' use of time and pupils' learning experiences would contribute to improvements in attainment. The following comment from an education authority representative sums up the situation as:

> *We have no mechanism for linking the CA programme directly to improved attainment; it is doubtful if such a link can be made. However, there are clear qualitative improvements to pupils' experiences as a result of the CA programme.*
>
> Education authority representative

With the patchy nature of the attainment data available at present it is not possible to say much about the efficacy of different approaches to deployment. Furthermore, many authorities have deployed classroom assistants to schools largely on the basis of school rolls or pupil:teacher ratios, leaving schools free to

determine their allocation to specific classes. There has, therefore, been a blurring of models of deployment which we identified at the pilot stage. However, there are aspects of the ways classroom assistants are being used that can be compared. For example, the information we have at present suggests that where classroom assistant's time with individual teachers is very short, it is seen as less effective. We will investigate such differences in use of classroom assistants further in the second stage of the evaluation.

5.3 Impact on utilisation of teachers' time

This evaluation did not set out to measure any changes in pattern of how teachers use their time as a consequence of working with classroom assistants. Since the evaluation was not commissioned until the initiative was already under way, there was no opportunity to establish a 'before and after' comparison of their use of time. Furthermore, the time and resources required to gather data on teachers' use of time from a large enough sample to be meaningful is well beyond those available. Therefore, the findings reported here are based on stakeholders' perceptions of changes in their use of time.

Most teachers perceived that the biggest change to occur was a reduction in the time they spent on preparing materials and resources for use in their classrooms. The presence of a classroom assistant, they believed, allowed them to concentrate on their teaching and also left them with more time for planning and generally reviving their enthusiasm for the job. However, respondents do not report that resource preparation occupies the major part of classroom assistants' time. This seems to indicate that a small input – 'an extra pair of hands' – has the potential to alter teachers' perceptions of their workload.

Most respondents report that the largest portion of classroom assistants' time is spent in supporting learning within the classroom. Only half of the teachers felt that they spend more time on teaching when a classroom assistant is present, but there was a widespread feeling that the nature of that teaching changed. Teachers were able to spend more time concentrating on individuals and groups, while the classroom assistant supervised the other members of the class, resolving minor problems and reducing interruptions of the teacher. Thus, the time classroom assistants spend in class supporting learning is seen as having an impact on the effectiveness of what teachers are doing, if not always on the amount of time they spend on teaching. Teachers still teach, but they may do so more effectively with a classroom assistant to help them.

As already mentioned, some teachers felt they had more time to plan when classroom assistants took on some routine preparation tasks. However, time to plan and discuss with classroom assistants was often felt to be lacking and this relates directly to the contracts of employment under which classroom assistants are employed. These may need to be reviewed. On the positive side, very few teachers indicated that planning for and working with a classroom assistant had actually led to an increase in their workload overall.

5.4 Impact on classroom interaction and the learning experiences of pupils

As well as the benefits for teachers discussed in 5.3 above, classroom assistants have an impact on pupils' learning experiences. They help to keep pupils on task and, therefore, to encourage more productive working habits. They also work with groups of pupils on practical tasks, reinforcing learning and increasing their participation in a range of learning experiences. Many respondents linked the presence of classroom assistants with improvements in pupils' motivation, confidence and self-esteem – all of which are difficult to quantify.

Classroom assistants' relationships with pupils and teachers are widely seen as being good. Most teachers report that they have experienced few difficulties working with classroom assistants, indeed it has been much easier than with some other adults. It is not clear whether this is related to the personality of the individuals concerned, the nature of their role or some other reason.

A few factors did cause concern. Some teachers pointed out that it took time to adjust to working as a team. Others found that the experience and training of individual assistants did not always match their expectations. Lack of time to plan and discuss activities was sometimes problematic, as was the reallocation of an assistant from a timetabled session to other general school duties. A few respondents wondered whether the larger numbers of adults in the classroom would affect pupils' ability to work independently. But there is no evidence that this has been deleterious.

5.5 Issues to take forward

Overall, we believe that the evidence at this interim stage of the evaluation paints a positive picture of the classroom assistants initiative. Some concerns have emerged but these may disappear as teachers and assistants gain more experience of working together. Others may need to be resolved through changes in working practices. We will focus on the following issues during the next stage of the evaluation.

Nature of the role and balance of time

Both schools and classroom assistants now expect that the main focus of the classroom assistant's role should be on supporting learning within the classroom. Lesser amounts of their time are spent on preparation of materials and resources and on supporting pupils in a variety of contexts. We will investigate perceptions of the relative benefits of these various types of activity both for teachers and for pupils in the next stage of the evaluation.

We hope to identify the most effective way of allocating the classroom assistants' time.

Planning and liaison

Since large amounts of classroom assistant time are being spent in classrooms supporting learning, adequate time for teachers and assistants to plan and discuss activities is clearly necessary. Some authorities are able to make provision for this in assistants' contracts, but others are not. Some schools are providing this time, for example during assemblies or by using senior staff to cover for class teachers, while many others are leaving teachers and assistants to find time in breaks or in their own time. Where playground supervision or crowded staff rooms have led schools to give classroom assistants breaks at a different time from other staff this option is not available.

We will pursue further any difficulties and limitations arising from lack of joint planning time and explore further the range of approaches schools are adopting to create additional planning time for teachers and classroom assistants.

Timetabling

Schools have taken different approaches to allocating classroom assistant time: the majority of assistants work with a number of teachers and classes in the course of the week and many also undertake more general school duties. There are some indications that where this deployment leads to very short times in individual classes, their contribution is seen as less effective. The practice adopted in some schools of assigning classroom assistants general school responsibilities (for example for first aid) is causing frustration in some places. In such cases where classroom assistants may be called upon to leave a classroom, the nature of tasks which class teachers assign to them is likely to be different, perhaps not using fully assistants' abilities.

We will monitor concerns about the use of assistants' time both within and outwith the classroom as the evaluation progresses.

Training

The expectation that most classroom assistants will spend a substantial proportion of their time supporting learning in class increases the need for them to have appropriate qualifications and training. Some respondents were concerned about the length of time it was taking to establish suitable training programmes, and not all assistants appear to have opportunities to participate in training. Furthermore, the amount and nature of support which schools are able to provide for their assistants appears to vary considerably. The delay in providing support material for teachers may also mean that some have had unrealistic expectations of what a classroom assistant is capable of undertaking.

We will continue to track the provision of training and support for all those involved in the initiative to see whether early concerns about its availability and appropriateness are addressed.

Inclusion in the staff room and whole-school development activities

Some schools have adopted the practice of 'split intervals' with classroom assistants taking their breaks at different times from teachers. Disadvantages to

this practice were highlighted by some respondents; assistants do not feel part of the team and miss opportunities to communicate with teachers on both a social and professional level. There were also logistical difficulties in many schools regarding the inclusion of assistants in whole-school meetings, in-service events, and even in individual meetings with the teachers with whom they work.

We will investigate further the extent of such difficulties and their impact on the effectiveness of working relationships. We will also look for innovative approaches schools have developed to tackle these problems.

The future of classroom assistants

Finally some respondents raised a range of issues concerning the future for the classroom assistants in Scottish primary schools. Will the supply of suitable candidates keep up with demand over time? What are schools and authorities doing to keep high quality staff interested and motivated? Will the post of classroom assistant become seen as an informal preparation for embarking on teacher training, especially for women returning to work after having a family? If so what are the implications for the turnover of classroom assistants? What about future arrangements for funding classroom assistants and providing training?

These will, wherever possible, be explored further in the second stage of the evaluation.

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Appendix 1: Details of school sample

Full sample: survey schools

The sample of schools comprises 96 schools, 3 from each authority criteria for inclusion includes:

- geographical location
- school size from 6 to 660 pupils
- time classroom assistant has been in post: 0 to approximately 2 years
- classroom assistants' working hours: 1 to more than 27.5 hours per week.

Sub-sample: case study schools

School (roll)	School context
A (232 pupils)	• Semi-urban area with a mixed catchment: traditional layout. • One classroom assistant in post since pilot phase. • Focus is support in P4 - P7 for Literacy and Numeracy. • Classroom assistant is IT specialist and assists with Circle Time.
B (180 pupils)	• Semi-rural setting: traditional building. • One classroom assistant, 15 hours/week, started August 1999. Two others starting Oct/Nov 2000 for 7.5 and 4 hours/week. • Focus is rigorous planning and commitment of the headteacher to maximise the potential of Classroom Assistants to benefit all pupils.
C (326 pupils)	• Middle class suburban setting: modern building, recently extended. • Three full-time classroom assistants, one since pilot phase, others new in August 2000. • Assistants work with classes in one 'department' - early, middle or upper stages. Also have responsibility for a resource area, and an afternoon set aside each week for this.
D (38 pupils)	• Traditional small rural school with teaching headteacher, P1-3 and P4-7. • One classroom assistant from initiative, 12.5 hours/week, since August 1999. School currently employs second assistant for 7.5 hours/week. • Initiative assistant works with early years class, school-funded assistant works in upper class. Role is general support as needed.
E (192 pupils)	• Urban setting: semi-open plan with classrooms off a central open area. • One full-time classroom assistant since August 1999. A new assistant for 9.5 hours since August 2000. • Established assistant supports the P4 class which has been involved in the Early Intervention Programme (was with them as P3 last year). • Other assistant works in the early years for 9.5 hours and as an SEN auxiliary for the rest of the week.
F (236 pupils)	• Community school in urban setting: high free meals entitlement. • Two full-time classroom assistants, one since pilot, one since August 2000. Pilot assistant is nursery nurse, works in early stages mostly supporting Early Intervention. • New assistant works further up school.

Appendix 2: Survey methodology

The postal questionnaires were distributed in October 2000 and replies were processed in December 2000. Response rates for each group were as follows.

Respondent group	Number of replies	Response rate (% of possible replies)
Headteachers	74	77
Class teachers	114	58
Classroom assistants	95	—
Education authorities	28	88
Parents	56	—

Overall we received replies from at least one person in 81 of the 96 sample schools, a response rate of 84%.

Profile of the respondents

Headteachers

60 (81%) had classroom assistants in their school

14 (19%) had no classroom assistants

Number of classroom assistants	% Headteachers
1	42
2	24
3	21
4	7
5	3
6	3

Classroom assistants

Background information about the classroom assistants can be found in the annotated questionnaire in Appendix 3. This summarises the replies as a percentage of the total number of respondents, n=95.

Class teachers

Background information about the class teachers can be found in the annotated questionnaire in Appendix 3. This summarises the replies as a percentage of the total responses, n=114, except for Questions 7 to 22. These questions were only for respondents with classroom assistants, of whom there were 79.

Appendix 3: Questionnaires

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

ANNOTATED

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

95 returns

National Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

Postal Survey 2000

This questionnaire is part of a research project to find out about the impact of the Classroom Assistants Initiative introduced by the Government in 1999. We are surveying classroom assistants themselves to learn more about their backgrounds and what they think about their roles. We have included a few questions about previous posts you may have held in school because we are interested to know how many classroom assistants were working in schools in some other role before the initiative. In all other questions we would ask you to respond only with reference to your role as a classroom assistant.

We do hope you will help us by completing this questionnaire; the views of classroom assistants are very important in this project. Please tick the boxes as indicated and add brief comments where appropriate. Your responses will be treated in confidence.

Thank you.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact Ursula Schlapp or Julia Davidson at SCRE on 0131 557 2944

Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: Scottish Council for Research in Education, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 27 October, or as soon as possible.

YOU

1. Are you: Female? 96% Male? 4%

2. Are you: under 25? 5%
   25-34? 17%
   35-44? 55%
   45-54? 18%
   55+? 5%

3. Do you live: within/close to the school catchment area? 49%
   outside the school catchment area? 51%

4. What qualifications do you hold? *(Tick all that apply)*

   O or S grades 77%
   Highers 47%
   SVQs 25% Please note level(s) 24%
   HNC or HND 18%
   Other FE 24%
   Degree 9%

5. Do you have qualifications in childcare? Yes 32% No 64%
   teaching? Yes 3% No 72%

   If YES to either, please give brief details. 33%

6. (a) Have you held any other posts/responsibilities in the school? *(Tick all that apply)*

   Parent helper 49%
   General auxiliary 20%
   Special Needs auxiliary 45%
   Nursery Nurse 5%
   Playground supervisor 26%
   Other *(Please specify)* 22%

   (b) Do you currently hold another post/responsibility as well as classroom assistant?

   Yes 27% No 73%

THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT POST

7. Where did you hear about the post? *(Tick one box only)*

Local press	39%
Internal council job vacancy bulletin	16%
Job centre	5%
National press	3%
From the school	27%
Community centre/library	0%
Other *(Please specify)*	3%

3% open responses

8. When did you take up the post of classroom assistant?

_____

9. How long have you worked in this school:

(a) in any post? _____

(b) as a classroom assistant? _____

10. (a) How many hours per week do you work as a classroom assistant? _____

(b) Is any of this time designated as planning/liaison time?

Yes 39% (No of hours/wk _____) No 59%

(c) Is any of this time designated as time for training/ development?

Yes 27% (No of hours/wk _____) No 68%

11. How many classes are you working with this term? _____

Please specify the stage(s) of these classes _____

WHAT YOU DO

12. Which of the following describe how your tasks are planned?
(Tick all that apply)

I meet with the classroom teacher(s) each day out of lesson time	37%
I meet with the classroom teacher(s) weekly to plan ahead	8%
I meet with the classroom teacher(s) occasionally to discuss my activities	28%
The classroom teacher(s) assign me tasks when I arrive at the class	87%
The HT/DHT/AHT assigns me tasks around the school	52%
Other (*please give details*)	9%

13. Which of the following records do you have/keep?
(Tick one box for each row)

	Always	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
A timetable of where you will be working	78%	3%	3%	9%
Class teacher's timetable/ plans	18%	7%	6%	41%
A log/diary of your activities	43%	12%	1%	31%
Other (*please give details*)	2%	3%	2%	6%

14. Please rank the following types of activity from 1 to 6 to indicate what you spend the most time on.
(1=most time spent on this; 2=next most time spent etc. If you spend no time on one of these types of activity, please write N/A instead of a number)

- admin support in class - e.g. taking register, collecting money, handing out letters _____
- social-emotional support - in class, playground, on visits - e.g. encourage good behaviour/attitudes, treat minor accidents _____
- supporting learning - e.g. keep on task, oversee practical activities, answer general queries _____
- admin support out of classroom - e.g. photocopying, recording TV/radio, organising library/resources _____
- classroom organisation - e.g. creating displays, setting out resources for activities _____
- planning and development - e.g. meetings with class teacher, keeping log/diary of activities, in-school staff development, external training _____

If you feel there is something you spend significant time on that fits under none of the above headings, please note it here.

14% open responses

15. (a) Do you have a job description?

Yes 98% No 2%

(b) If NO, has your remit been made clear in some other way?

Yes 3% No 0%

Please give brief details

4% open responses

16. Do you feel all the tasks you do fall clearly within your remit?

Yes 85% No 12% Don't know 2%

If NO, please explain

11% open responses

17. Do you have any concerns about your remit, or about any of the tasks you are asked to perform?

Yes 17% No 82%

If YES, please give details

15% open responses

18. How would you describe how you work with pupils?
(Tick one box for each row)

	In most/all classes	In some classes	In one class	In no classes
I mostly work with groups	43%	39%	17%	0%
I mostly work with individual pupils	11%	40%	31%	13%
I mostly oversee rest of class while teacher works with groups or individuals	12%	25%	18%	42%
I support pupils in activities related to an area of my expertise (e.g. ICT, art/craft)	25%	38%	12%	21%
I support pupils in activities related to the Early Intervention programme	9%	21%	16%	45%
I undertake a wide range of tasks	73%	13%	11%	4%
Something else (*please specify*)	1%	3%	1%	3%

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

'Research in the service of education' is the motto of the Scottish Council for Research in Education. For over 60 years it has put this into action through carrying out research studies in schools and other institutions across the educational system at all levels from pre-school to adult and vocational education. It also provides a range of associated research, information and communication services. SCRE aims to make documents arising from its own research available to those who are interested. Reports in the Project Report series are not specially prepared for publication. Enquiries about SCRE publications are welcome and should be directed to Information Services.

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SCRE 89

19. (a) Do you feel you generally have good relationships with pupils?

Yes 95% These are developing 3% No 0%

(b) Please describe these relationships briefly, including any difficulties.

68% open responses

20. (a) Do you feel you generally have good relationships with classroom teachers?

Yes 89% These are developing 8% No 0%

(b) Please describe these relationships briefly, including any difficulties.

69% open responses

21. Have you experienced any difficulties with your position in school out of the classroom (e.g. in the staffroom, availability of parking spaces/toilets etc, at breaktimes, with other staff)?

Yes 15% No 84%

If YES, please give details

17% open responses

SUPPORT AND TRAINING

22. Please indicate how useful you find/have found the following types of in-school support (*Tick one box for each row*):

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not at all useful	Have not had this
Induction information	44%	40%	3%	11%
Planning meetings with class teacher(s)	38%	15%	0%	44%
Progress meetings with AHT/DHT	22%	12%	0%	55%
Progress meetings with HT	27%	13%	0%	56%
Whole school staff development	22%	16%	0%	58%
In-school development for CAs	26%	13%	0%	59%
Other (*please specify*)	5%	1%	0%	4%

23. Please indicate how useful you find/have found the following types of external support *(Tick one box for each row)*:

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not at all useful	Have not had this
Induction training from the EA	35%	29%	5%	24%
Progress meetings with EA personnel	14%	13%	63%	0%
Development sessions from EA	17%	16%	0%	58%
Training related to PDA for CAs	27%	23%	2%	38%
Other college-based training	13%	11%	0%	63%
Other *(please specify)*	0%	0%	0%	7%

2% open responses

24. (a) What have you found to be the most useful type of support and/or training?

86% open responses

(b) Please indicate any other support or training you would particularly like.

65% open responses

25. At the moment, do you have any aspirations to develop your career further?

Yes 48% No 44%

If YES, please give details

52%

IN CONCLUSION

26. Please indicate how satisfied you are with:
(Tick one box for each row):

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
the job	82%	17%	1%	0%
the hours	77%	17%	4%	1%
conditions in the school	76%	21%	2%	0%

27. What do you feel is the single most important contribution you make as a classroom assistant?

99% open responses

28. Please use this space to make any other comments on being a classroom assistant.

62% open responses

Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: Scottish Council for Research in Education, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 27 October, or as soon as possible.

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

ANNOTATED

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

114 returns

National Evaluation of the Classroom Assistants Initiative

Postal Survey 2000

This questionnaire is part of a research project to find out about the impact of the Classroom Assistants Initiative introduced by the Government in 1999. We are surveying classroom teachers, some who are working with classroom assistants and others who are not, to learn more about the impact of the initiative on teachers' time, on classroom interaction and on pupil learning experiences.

We do hope you will help us by completing this questionnaire: the views of classroom teachers are very important in this project. Please tick the boxes as indicated and add brief comments where appropriate. Your responses will be treated in confidence.

Thank you.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact Ursula Schlapp or Julia Davidson at SCRE on 0131 557 2944

Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: Scottish Council for Research in Education, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 27 October, or as soon as possible.

YOU

1. Are you: Female? 95% Male? 5%
2. How many years have you been teaching?

1-2 years	2%
3-5 years	13%
5-10 years	17%
10-20 years	25%
More than 20 years	43%

3. (a) Which stage(s) are you teaching this session? _____

   (b) How many pupils are there in your class? _____

4. Which of the following best describes your position in the school?

Class teacher	65%
Senior teacher	24%
Assistant headteacher	3%
Depute headteacher	—
Headteacher	4%

OTHER ADULTS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

5. (a) Do any of the following adults work with you in your class?
   (*Please tick all that apply and write in the approximate number of hours per week*)

Classroom assistant	68%	(No. of hours per wk 61% open responses)
Subject specialists (music, art, PE)	41%	(No. of hours per wk 41% open responses)
Learning support specialist	48%	(No. of hours per wk 48% open responses)
Special needs auxiliary	23%	(No. of hours per wk 21% open responses)
General auxiliary	8%	(No. of hours per wk 7% open responses)
Parent volunteers	21%	(No. of hours per wk 20% open responses)
Other (*please specify*)	14%	(No. of hours per wk 14% open responses)

   (b) How easy do you find it to work with other adults in your class?

   Easy 63% Difficult 0% It varies 35%

   Please note any particular factors that explain your answer.

   33% open responses

6. Which of the following best describes how you manage the activities of other types of adult in your class? *(Tick one box for each column)*

	Classroom assistants	Trained specialists	Auxiliaries/ Volunteers
None of these work in my class	22%	16%	27%
We meet beforehand to plan who will do what	26%	38%	11%
I tell them which group/child to work with and what to do	62%	7%	37%
We work it out as the lesson progresses	4%	1%	1%
I leave it to them to decide what needs to be done	2%	11%	0%
Other *(please specify)*	1%	1%	1%

If you do not work with a classroom assistant, please go to Q23.

WORKING WITH CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS (For Q7 to 22 the number of respondents is 79)

7. When did you first work with a classroom assistant?

Before August 1999	August 1999 - March 2000	April - June 2000	Since August 2000
27%	43%	4%	25%

8. Please tell us how much time the classroom assistant spends in your class at present (e.g. 1 hour each day, 3 hours each Friday, 5 hours every day)

98% open responses

9. Does your classroom assistant also work in other classes at present?

Yes 87% No 14%

10. How long will the present classroom assistant timetable continue?

All session	54%
This term	22%
This month	0%
Don't know	22%
Other *(please specify)*	6%

5% open responses

71 CT

11. (a) How easy do you find working with a classroom assistant?

Easy	Difficult	It varies
80%	0%	20%

(b) Please note any particular factors that explain your answer.

41% open responses

PLANNING/LIAISON WITH CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

12. (a) Do you meet for planning/liaising with the classroom assistant outside lesson times?

Yes, when we can find a little time	Yes, we have set times for this	No
59%	11%	28%

(b) Do you integrate what the classroom assistant will be doing into your forward planning?

Yes 67% No 30%

(c) If you have experienced any difficulties concerning planning/liaison with classroom assistant(s), please comment here.

33% open responses

WHAT THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT DOES

13. Please rank the following types of activity from 1 to 6 to indicate what the classroom assistant spends the most time on when supporting you.
(1=most time spent on this; 2=next most time spent etc. If the assistant spends no time on one of these types of activity, please write N/A instead of a number)

- admin support in class - e.g. taking register, collecting money, handing out letters _____
- social-emotional support - in class, playground, on visits - e.g. encourage good behaviour/attitudes, treat minor accidents _____
- supporting learning - e.g. keep on task, oversee practical activities, answer general queries _____
- admin support out of classroom - e.g. photocopying, recording TV/radio, organising library/resources _____
- classroom organisation - e.g. creating displays, setting out resources for activities _____
- planning and development - e.g. meetings with class teacher, keeping log/diary of activities, in-school staff development, external training _____

14. Does the classroom assistant spend time on activities connected with the Early Intervention programme when supporting you?

Most of the time 13% Some of the time 24% Occasionally 6% Not at all 54%

15. How would you describe how the classroom assistant works within your class? (*Tick one box for each row*)

	Yes	No
S/he mostly works with groups	82%	11%
S/he mostly works with individual pupils	47%	44%
S/he mostly oversees rest of class while teacher works with groups or individuals	23%	67%
S/he supports pupils in activities related to an area of expertise (e.g. ICT, art/craft)	66%	23%
S/he undertakes a wide range of tasks	82%	10%
Other (*please specify*)		

4% open responses

16. (a) Do you feel the classroom assistant has good relationships with pupils?

Yes 86% These are developing 11% No 0%

(b) Please describe the classroom assistant:pupil relationships briefly.

70% open responses

TEACHING STRATEGIES, APPROACHES AND TIME FOR TEACHING

17. To what extent do you agree that the following are true when you have a classroom assistant in your class? (*Tick one box for each row*)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I expect more from pupils	11%	48%	34%	3%
I have increased enthusiasm for teaching	6%	46%	39%	3%
I do more teaching of individual pupils	18%	56%	23%	1%
I do more group teaching	23%	47%	23%	1%
I do more whole-class teaching	4%	11%	71%	8%
My workload has significantly increased	1%	5%	54%	37%
I teach in the same way as before I had a classroom assistant	9%	35%	48%	5%
I spend more time assessing attainment	3%	43%	48%	3%
The pupils experience more practical activities	23%	59%	16%	0%
The pupils experience more adult/child interaction	43%	53%	1%	0%
The pupils spend more time on task	27%	57%	11%	0%
Other (*please specify*)	4%	4%	0%	0%

73 CT

18. (a) Would you say that you spend more time, less time or about the same as before on these activities when a classroom assistant is present in your class?
(Tick one box for each row)

	Spend more time	Spend less time	About the same
Teaching	56%	1%	43%
Managing learning	33%	14%	5%
Discipline	5%	42%	54%
Planning	30%	3%	68%
Preparing materials/resources	6%	70%	23%
Marking/recording	5%	9%	85%
Register, money collection etc	29%	70%	0%
Pastoral care and related activities	3%	25%	70%

(b) What has been the biggest change in your use of time resulting from the presence of a classroom assistant?

80% open responses

IMPACT OF THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

19. To what extent do you think the classroom assistants initiative has your affected your pupils'...

(Tick one box for each row)

	Great improvement	Some improvement	No change	It is now worse
behaviour?	4%	37%	56%	1%
attendance?	1%	1%	95%	0%
motivation?	4%	76%	18%	0%
participation in activities?	22%	66%	10%	0%
range of learning experiences?	20%	61%	16%	0%
other *(please specify)*	1%	1%	1%	0%

20. (a) How satisfied are you overall with the impact of the classroom assistant initiative on hours per wk your school?

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
66%	30%	1%	1%

(b) Please explain your answer

72% open responses

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

21. (a) Have you received any training/support /guidance for class teachers in connection with the Classroom Assistants Initiative?

Yes 37% No 63%

(b) If YES, please give details.

37% open responses

(c) How useful did you find this support?

Very 13% Somewhat 19% Not very 4% Not at all 0%

22. Please note any training/support/guidance you would like to see offered in the future:

(a) for yourself.

34% open responses

(b) for your classroom assistant.

44% open responses

ATTAINMENT

23. (a) Would you say there been any change in overall levels of pupil attainment in your classes since the session 1998-99?

Great improvement	Some improvement	No change	It has fallen
6%	52%	23%	0%

(b) Indicate which of the following types of evidence you have, and what each tells you about how attainment has changed.

	No evidence available	**Improvement**	**No change**	**It has fallen**
Your own assessment of performance against 5-14 levels	8%	48%	16%	0%
National Test performance against 5-14 levels	16%	41%	13%	1%
Performance on other standardised tests (*please specify*) 9% open responses	15%	8%	14%	0%
other (*please specify*)	4%	4%	0%	0%

If changes have only been in certain curriculum areas, please comment here.

24% open responses

75 CT

24. Please list below, starting with the most important, three factors which you feel have had an effect on pupil attainment in your classes since the session 1998-99? (eg new school policy for ..., Early Intervention, new teachers to reduce infant class sizes, introduction of classroom assistants)

1 84% open responses

2 76% open responses

3 67% open responses

IN CONCLUSION

25. What is the single most important contribution made by the classroom assistants initiative?

75% open responses

26. Please note below any concerns you have about the classroom assistants initiative.

43% open responses

27. Any other comment?

30% open responses

Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided to arrive at: SCRE, 15 St John Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 8JR by Friday 27 October, or as soon as possible.

Appendix 4: Case study methodology

The following topic guide serves to illustrate the range of issues covered in the first round of school visits.

Class teacher topic guide

The questions will be flexible taking about 15 minutes based on activities noted during the observation session, in particular those researched by the digital camera. The main focus for the discussion with the class teacher is on the effects of the presence of a classroom assistant.

Background information

Name (Female/Male):
Position:
Classroom Assistant:
School:
Year group:
Activity/event:
Subject/ main curriculum area:
Pupil grouping and class organisation:
Description of pupils (number of girls: boys):

Teacher's view of the activity in question

- Can we talk about how you see what was going on here?
- Do you feel that this session went smoothly?
- Did you feel this session achieved your desired effects on the children?
- How typical is this session?
- Do similar activities usually go differently?

Classroom atmosphere and pupil attitudes

- How long have you been working with this classroom assistant?
- Have you had any teething problems settling into working together?
- How often do you have a classroom assistant with you?
- What impact do you think the Classroom Assistant has had so far for the class atmosphere? Manageability of class? Pupil attitudes generally? Pupils' attitudes to the other adults in the classroom?

Meeting all pupils' needs

- Is there anything in particular you are able to do because a Classroom Assistant is present?
- What impact do you think the Classroom Assistants Programme may have had already or is likely to have in the future for:
  (a) The behaviour of individual children;
  (b) Pupil achievement/performance/attainment;

- Do you have any evidence so far?

(c) Pupil attitudes to:

i. the teacher:

ii. each other:

iii. work:

iv. their own self esteem:

Changing teaching and learning dynamics and approaches

- Did implementing the Classroom Assistants initiative cause any problems in terms of planning and liaising? Why? Do you liaise with the Classroom Assistant before, during or after the lesson?
- What do you see as the difference between the Classroom Assistants' role and the contribution of other adults in the classroom?

What do you think is the most positive aspect of having a classroom assistant?

- What problems might you expect to encounter with your Classroom Assistant in the future?
- How can the programme be modified in order to meet your needs.
- Do you think the programme is sustainable for your school in the future? What about in other schools? Why?

Any other comments?